the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 13, 2008

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PATRONS AND ARTISTS
JOSEPH EPSTEIN

CAN THEY CATCH UP?

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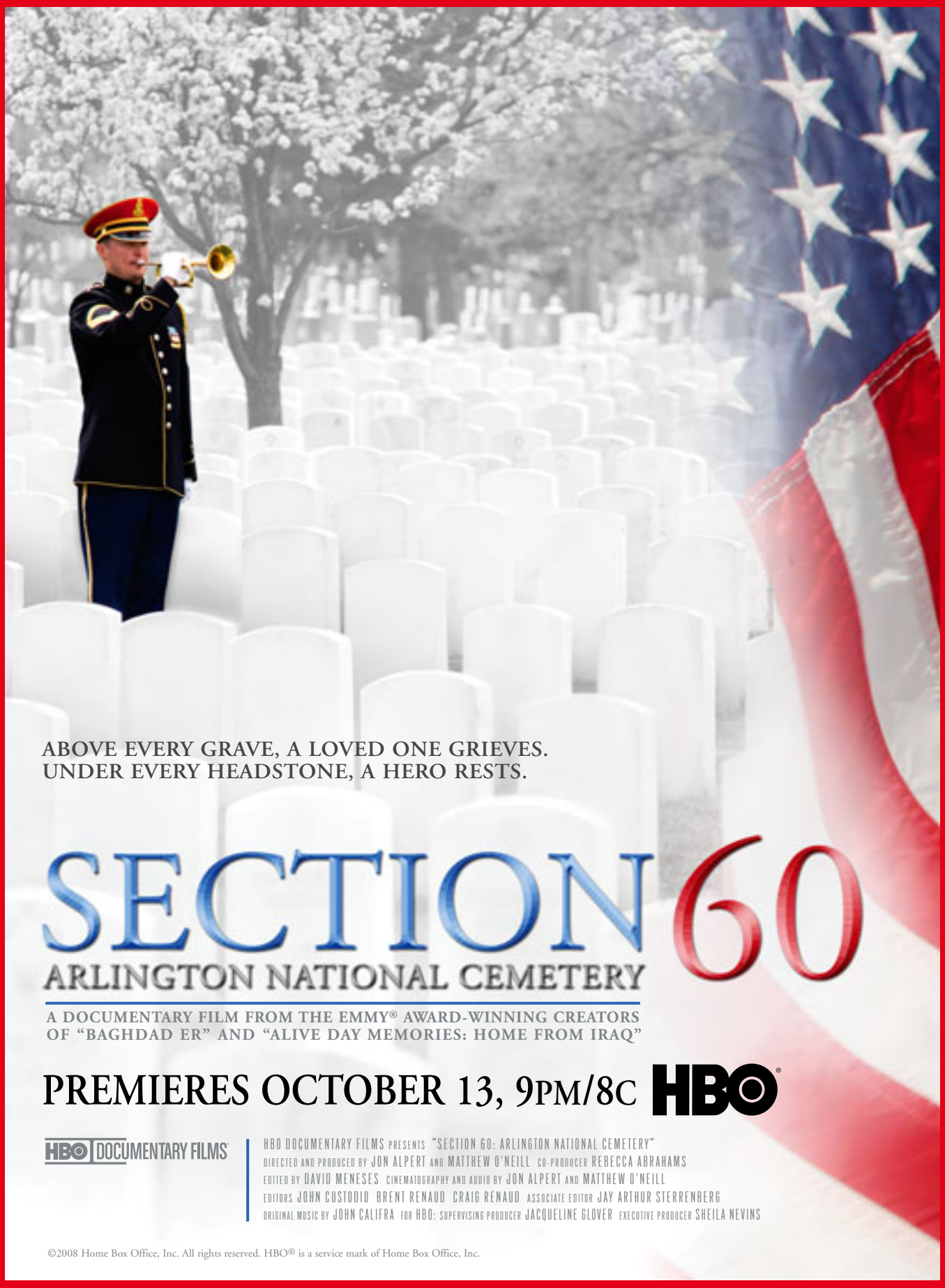

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—Peter Berkowitz

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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'New York Sun,' R.I.P

The Scrapbook has been wearing black this week, mourning the loss of the *New York Sun*, which published its last issue on September 30. Like its namesake, a venerable New York institution that closed in 1950, the 21st-century incarnation of the *Sun* described itself aptly as a newspaper that "stood for constitutional government, equality under the law, free enterprise, and the American idea."

We are sorry first of all for the paper's many devoted readers in New York, who will now have to make it through the day without a beloved publication. We are sorry also for our friends who worked as reporters, critics, columnists, and editors at the upstart paper over the last seven years and found it a congenial outlet for their labors.

In his obituary for the paper, "Picking Up the Flag of the Sun," Stephen Miller captured the joy and exuberance that characterize newspapering at its finest moments:

> Inside the Chambers Street newsroom, just a block from the original Sun offices across from City Hall, spirits ran high. A tiny crew—a handful of reporters and one photographer at the start—cranked out the paper every weekday. Prospective news assistants were asked if they had driver's licenses because, the managing editor explained, they might be called upon to drive the newspaper's delivery trucks. The paper marked the 150th anniversary of the decision to create Central Park with an editorial correcting the original New York Sun's opposition to the plan. . . .

Let us hope that, at some future date, worthy successors will again pick up this flag.

We should add that we are sorry for ourselves, too. Besides its many other good works, the *Sun* was home to a wonderful crossword puzzle to which The Scrapbook grew quite attached. It was edited by Peter Gordon and lauded in these pages three years ago by Matt Gaffney as the "best crossword puzzle in the country." We would say that this leaves a gaping 15-minute hole in our day, but that might be construed as braggadocio. ♦

The Academic Horror Show (cont.)

Nat Hentoff reports in his latest column for the *Washington Times* on an outrage at Brandeis University.

> Professor Donald Hindley, on the faculty for 48 years, teaches a course on Latin American politics. Last fall, he described how Mexican migrants to the United States used to be discriminatorily called "wetbacks." An anonymous student complained to the administration accusing Mr. Hindley of using prejudicial language. It was the first complaint against him in 48 years. After an investigation, during which Mr. Hindley was not told the nature of the complaint, Brandeis Provost Marty Krauss informed Mr. Hindley that "The University will not tolerate inappropriate, racial and discriminatory conduct by members of its faculty." . . . An administration monitor was assigned to his class. Threatened with "termination," Mr. Hindley was ordered to take a sensitivity-training class. With no charges against him, no evidence of misconduct given him and no hearing, he refused in the spirit of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, for whom this university is named.

As Waylon and Willie sang, "Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be professors." ♦

The Kingston Duo

The Scrapbook felt a jolt of nostalgia last week when we read that Nick Reynolds, founder and lead singer of the Kingston Trio, had died at age 75. We concede that the folk revival movement of the 1950s and early '60s has a lot to answer for—Joan Baez, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," Pete Seeger, etc.—and we further concede that the folk-singing scene in *Animal House* (1978) is the highlight of the movie. That's the one where a toga-clad Bluto Blutarsky (John Belushi) comes upon a long-haired folkie strumming and warbling an impossibly insipid ballad (*I gave my love a cherry that had no stone / I gave my love a chicken that had no bone*) and smashes his guitar against the frat house wall.

But the Kingston Trio, to their credit, were as much interested in commercial success (also known as satisfying their audience) as in bogus "authenticity," and they were talented musicians whose three-part harmonies were tight, highly rhythmic, and, for a decade straddling the Eisenhower/Kennedy administrations, very appealing to Americans. If you are a member of the Silent Generation, or a Baby Boomer who once possessed a hula hoop, you grew up listening to the Kingston Trio.

To be sure, rock music has so overwhelmed the popular culture that it is often forgotten that the airwaves in those days were as likely to feature "Scotch and Soda," "Tom Dooley,"

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of September 27, 2004)

"Worried Man," or "MTA" as, say, "Teen Angel" or Chubby Checker and "The Twist."

"MTA," by the way, was a lightning-fast nonsense song about a man named Charlie who boarded the subway in Boston at the Kendall Square station but couldn't leave the train because the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) had raised the fare during his ride (*He may ride forever 'neath the streets of Boston / He's the man who never returned*).

Granted, this song may lack the visceral appeal of Kurt Cobain's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," or the gentle lyricism of Eminem's "Just Don't Give a F—," but it certainly sounds like something that could happen in Boston. ♦

The Sitcom Review

In a disturbing new milestone in the continuing decline and fall of American intellectual rigor, THE SCRAPBOOK notes with dismay—and some amusement, truth to tell—that last week's edition of the venerable *New York Times Book Review* contained not one, but two, learned allusions to *The Odd Couple*, the 1965 Neil Simon laughfest that was turned into a movie in 1968 and a TV situation comedy that ran during 1970-75.

In his review of *The King and the Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and Edward the Seventh, Secret Partners* by David Fromkin, Johann Hari begins with this arresting thought: "Imagine a remake of 'The Odd Couple' in which Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau happen to rule the world." And then, just four pages later, Roy Blount Jr. deepens our understanding of *Blue Genes: A Memoir of Loss and Survival* by Christopher Lukas by explaining that "if Tony was Oscar Madison, Kit is Felix Ungar."

We've grown accustomed to the habit, among such distinguished *Times* op-ed essayists as Maureen Dowd, Frank Rich, Gail Collins, and others, of explaining the past and illuminating the present with incessant references to *Mister Ed*, *The Godfather Part II*, *Huckleberry Hound*, and *The Cosby Show*. But we confess to some surprise—and yes, a little disappointment—that the penchant for sitcom metaphors and Trivial Pursuit clues had spread to the tonier precincts of the *Book Review*.

Then again, maybe the joke's on THE SCRAPBOOK. For we forgot to mention that, during the 1982-83 TV season, there was broadcast yet another Simon knockoff called *The New Odd Couple*, featuring an all-black cast. As the postmodernists would say, what a concept! You can keep your Tocqueville quotes and your Virgil aphorisms: Where else but on network television have we explored the complexities of male bonding in America while advancing the national dialogue on race—and happily chuckling into the bargain? Our apologies to the thinkers at the *New York Times Book Review*. ♦

Metaphors We Could Have Done Without

"Barney Frank is about to give Mister Market a big enema" (a CNBC guest remarking on the likelihood that the House of Representatives would pass the Treasury's bailout plan, October 3). ♦

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Casual

The Grapes of Wrath

Champagne, France

Dawn's chill at last surrendered to the warmth of the mid-morning sun, as rows of verdant grapevines revealed their fruit seductively. Crouching on the chalky soil, I reached in with my pliers to snip off a bunch. The bright green Chardonnay grapes were almost luminescent. I took them, a handful at a time, and placed them in my faded yellow crate. In this age of iPhones and BlackBerrys, it was satisfying to look, quite literally, upon the fruits of my labor.

And to think you too can be a part of this earthy experience for only 57 euros. At Champagne Launois, just south of Épernay, tourists by the busload (mostly Belgians with unquenchable thirsts) come to pick grapes and reconnect with Mother Nature. Not to mention a "complimentary" lunch at the luxurious Château Launois and a bottle of bubbly to take home. Not to mention innumerable glasses of the stuff in the course of the day.

It's not a bad deal—at least for the winemaker. Give them a meal and a bottle, and the tourists will do the picking for you. (Of course Launois does employ a seasonal workforce to harvest the vast majority of its grapes, though the number of visitors trolling through the vineyard, 50 on most days, is impressive.) Not that I myself shelled out 57 euros (about $90). Fortunately, I was part of a small contingent of American journalists who were traveling through the region courtesy of the Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne, an association representing grape growers and makers of champagne.

In brief, the CIVC is fiercely protective of the name "champagne" and believes, logically, that it properly applies only to sparkling wine from the Champagne region. The visits —please do not say junkets—are designed to bring light to this worthy cause, though I am loath to shill for anyone simply because of a free trip to France along with copious amounts of truly exquisite wine, including a 1999 bottle of Amour de Deutz, a 1993 Roederer Cristal, and a 1988 Henriot Rosé, as well as a 1974 Armagnac, that last not champagne but thrown in for good measure. Let us just all agree that "California Champagne" is an oxymoron.

HAL MAYFORTH

On this day in the middle of harvest season, we Americans were instructed by our guide, a French beauty named Solène, to proceed carefully down the rows and leave no grape behind. The previous day we'd picked Pinot Noir at the illustrious Roederer estates, but after 20 minutes the *chef de caves* had kindly relieved us of our "duties" and off we'd gone to the tastings. At Launois, however, there was a sense that we really might have to work for a few hours to earn our lunch.

Joining us was a sizable group of elderly French tourists, a handful of reporters from India, and three women from Singapore. Though numbering a few dozen, the French were slow pickers. Some looked tired, others confused. My group was jovial at first, then indifferent, then seemingly incensed by the notion that we had no choice but to pick our way out. There was talk of forming a union. After half an hour, we simply refused to harvest any further until Solène said in her delicate way, "Please, just a little more, down this row." Three of us (me included) caved in to the pressure and finished the job like shameless scabs.

The Indians, on the other hand, toiled without complaint. In no time, they were 50 yards ahead of us. "No lunch until you pick all your grapes!" joked Rajiv Singhal, India's CIVC director. Or was he serious?

When our harvesting ended, bottles of champagne were uncorked. After a few glasses, we piled into an antique bus driven by the proprietor himself, Séverine Launois, who blasted 1950s rock and swerved his way back to the winery. The French broke into song and danced in the aisle, falling on top of each other. When we got to the parking lot, a number of them went to their cars and for some reason changed their clothes, oblivious to the spectacle they provided. The ladies from Singapore were utterly smashed (one was seen staggering disheveled out of the restroom) and shared a complexion pinker than a Brut Rosé.

Back at the château, we did have our lunch (a lovely four courses including chicken wrapped in bacon). But the whole production was a bit much, and by the end we were yearning for the quiet of the Deutz cellars or the coziness of Chartogne Taillet. It seems ridiculous now, returning home to the harsh realities of an economic crisis, to have complained about picking grapes. Certainly the Indians showed us a thing or two about a good work ethic. But at least we outlasted those ladies from Singapore.

Victorino Matus

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Borking Blame

Charlotte Allen's September 29 article, "Justice For All," mischaracterizes the role of the American Bar Association in the U.S. Senate's failure to confirm the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Robert H. Bork. But as John Adams reminds us, "facts are stubborn things."

Allen perpetuates an oft-repeated but erroneous myth that the split vote of the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary produced an unfavorable rating of Judge Bork. This is not true. In fact, the Standing Committee gave him its highest rating of "well qualified" to be an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. This vote by a substantial majority of the committee was the official vote communicated to the United States Senate.

The failure to confirm Judge Bork occurred in the Senate, not in the ABA—another important fact not to be dismissed or misrepresented.

H. Thomas Wells Jr.
President, American Bar Association
Birmingham, Ala.

Charlotte Allen responds: I did not say that the American Bar Association failed to rate Robert Bork as "well qualified," but merely called attention to the split vote on that issue, in which four members of the evaluation committee deemed the distinguished federal appellate judge and former Yale law professor merely "qualified" and a fifth member voted the equivalent of "present." Legal journalists observed at the time that the ABA's highly unusual non-unanimous vote helped sink Bork's confirmation by the Senate.

Gone Fishing

Thank you for Matt Labash's "The Passion of Dick Cheney" (September 22). I admire Vice President Dick Cheney and what I consider to be his deliberate and adept approach to politics and governance. It seems like these traits apply to his fishing style as well. As a former Jackson Hole dude ranch wrangler and now only a sporadic fly-fisherman living in Atlanta, I found the article compelling as it revealed the personality of an otherwise private figure. Unlike in Washington, D.C., one does not need to remain vigilant for snakes when angling, as the altitude in Jackson Hole is too great to support that species. Though maybe the aside about the bear alluded to different dangers in uncharted areas.

Mike Jablon
Atlanta, Ga.

Matt Labash confirms why I have always really liked Cheney. He is just the sort of guy I would want as a vice president if I were the president. He is loyal, smart, experienced, and above all, professionally selfless. One of my good friends says that you really learn about someone when you fish with him, and if you could not spend a day fishing with him in one boat you should never hire him. I would hire Dick Cheney in a heartbeat.

Mark Mendenhall
North Platte, Neb.

Because I have always admired Dick Cheney, I found Matt Labash's article to be a fascinating look at the man who is vilified by many people. I agree with Cheney's friend Jack Dennis. It's too bad more people don't get the opportunity to fish with Cheney. They would have a whole different perspective on the man.

Connie Patterson
Saratoga, Wyo.

I am very jealous of Matt Labash. As an avid fly-fisherman and a strong supporter of Vice President Cheney, I've dreamed of fishing with him. When I lived on the mainland, I would drive to Montana and Idaho every year to fish the Madison River and the South Fork of the Boise River. With Cheney straining the water in the front of the boat, Labash was lucky to catch two fish!

Walt Harvey
Honolulu, Hawaii

Underachievers

Liam Julian's review of *Real Education* ("Murray's Truths," September 22) fails to appreciate the fundamental basis for Charles Murray's criticism of public schools in this country. It is educators' reluctance to accept the underlying intellectual ability of the students they are educating.

Even if the performance of the 50 percent of students who will always be below average can somehow be improved, the shift will be neither significant nor permanent. The natural variation in intellectual ability has an enormous effect on what even the best teachers and schools can do.

Walt Gardner
Los Angeles, Calif.

Palin's Feminine Side

Noemie Emery's "The Palin Effect" (September 29) is spot on. I believe the left also dislikes Governor Palin because she is a strong, prominent woman who has not sold out her feminine side. She is pleasant, cares about her appearance, wears skirts, loves her husband and kids, and values a strong marriage.

Beverly Lyall
Fountain Valley, Calif.

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Can They Catch Up?

The odds are against John McCain and Sarah Palin winning this election. It's not easy to make up a 6-point deficit in the last four weeks. But it can be done.

Look at history. The Gore-Lieberman ticket gained about 6 points in the final two weeks of the 2000 campaign. Ford-Dole came back more than 20 points in less than two months in the fall of 1976. Both tickets were from the party holding the White House, and both were running against inexperienced, and arguably risky, opponents.

What's more, this year's race has already—twice—moved by more than 6 points over a span of only a few weeks. The race went from McCain up 2 (these are the Real Clear Politics averages) on September 14 to Obama plus 6 on October 2, less than three weeks later. In the four weeks before that, the race had moved from Obama plus 5 on August 12 to McCain plus 2 on September 12.

So while there's reason for McCain-Palin supporters to worry, there's no reason to despair.

Despair is what the Obama campaign is hoping and working for. If a campaign can convince supporters of the other candidate that the race is effectively over, the enthusiasm and volunteer efforts drop off—as does, ultimately, their turnout on Election Day. Just as important, undecided and loosely affiliated voters become persuaded there's no real contest and lose any incentive to look closely at the candidates. This explains the efforts of the Obama campaign—aided by a colluding media—to sell the notion that the race is over, that McCain supporters should give up, and undecided voters should tune out.

That's why the events at the end of last week were so important.

On Thursday night, Sarah Palin more than held her own in the vice-presidential debate against Joe Biden. She may well have stopped the McCain campaign's slide and, with her assaults on Obama's tax-and-spend liberalism and his willingness to lose in Iraq, set up McCain for a strong performance in Tuesday night's debate.

On Friday, enough House Republicans came around to pass the $700 billion financial bailout. It's no magic bullet, either in terms of the economy or the McCain campaign. But it gives both a chance.

McCain's decline in the second half of September is easily explained. A huge financial crisis coming to a head less than two months before Election Day is going to hurt the candidate of the incumbent party. The situation was made worse by the perception that not only was a Republican administration presiding over a financial meltdown, but congressmen from the same party were obstructing efforts to deal with it.

McCain's decision to come back to Washington to try to work out a deal was therefore sensible. While the Bush administration and the congressional Republicans were squabbling and Rome burned, McCain had no chance. Now there is a deal, and the political bleeding may have been staunched. McCain can go on the offensive for the final weeks.

But what kind of offensive?

The positive component is pretty straightforward: McCain and Palin are common sense conservatives and proven reformers. The record of reform can be emphasized and contrasted with Obama's and Biden's record of conventional, go-along, get-along liberalism. And implicitly: If McCain and Palin are reformers and outsiders, it's not Bush's third term.

More important is the negative message. The McCain campaign has to convince 51 percent of the voters they can't trust Barack Obama to be our next president. This has an ideological component and a character component.

Character is a legitimate issue. Obama hasn't shown much in the way of leadership or political courage, and he's consorted with dubious figures. It's fair to ask whether Barack Obama is personally trustworthy enough to be president, and the McCain campaign shouldn't be intimidated from going there.

But one shouldn't underestimate the ideological issue, and the potency of the fact that Obama and Biden are orthodox liberals. They're for raising taxes, federally funding abortions, naming activist judges, and losing wars. The American people may think—they do think—the country's on the wrong track, that the Bush administration has made too many mistakes and that the Republican party's no great shakes. But they haven't suddenly become liberals. And they probably aren't crazy about the prospect of a liberal administration governing unchecked, hand in hand with a liberal Congress. During the next four weeks, the McCain-Palin campaign should make this risky prospect vivid.

—William Kristol

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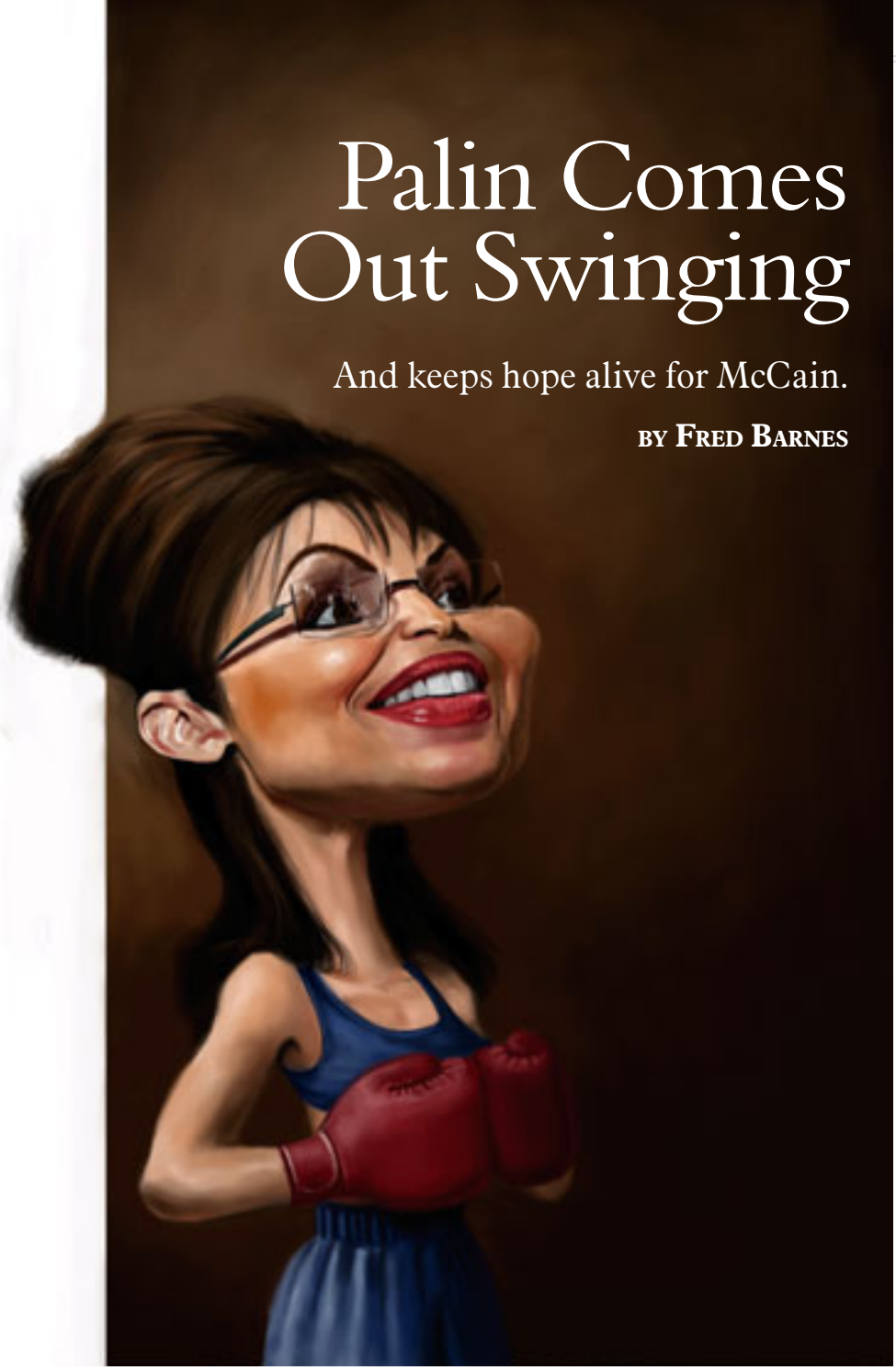
Palin Comes Out Swinging

And keeps hope alive for McCain.

BY FRED BARNES



PAUL MOYSE

Sarah Palin's scintillating success in last week's vice presidential debate with Joe Biden has made her an enormous asset (again) to John McCain's bid for the presidency. Now McCain must decide how to maximize her role in the campaign. Anything short of bringing her front and center makes no sense.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

McCain was thrilled by her debate performance. "The kind of excitement that she ignites, frankly, I have not seen before in American politics," he told talk radio host Mike Gallagher. Having gambled in choosing her as his running mate, he may be inclined to double down and give her equal billing in the campaign. He should.

But there are still Palin doubters inside his campaign. Their attitude is relief that Palin got through the debate unscathed. Now they fear that elevating her role would be risky. She'd be vulnerable to the media wolves.

This thinking—that Palin might embarrass McCain—is what prompted the dubious decision to keep her tightly tethered for nearly a month following her rousing acceptance speech at the Republican convention. She gave a few interviews with carefully selected TV anchors, did poorly, and quickly became a burden for McCain, a running mate who failed the do-no-harm test for veep picks.

Her handlers were part of the problem. They gave her index cards on the issues she'd be allowed to discuss, instructed her to stay on message when dealing with the media, told her to echo McCain's thoughts and say little more. When she choked in the television interviews, they blamed her. Even McCain was miffed to find she wasn't reading newspapers and keeping up on daily events.

In 1984, President Reagan's advisers were accused of having "brutalized" him in preparing him for his first (disastrous) debate with Walter Mondale. They coached him to stress details, hardly his forte. Palin, too, was initially prepped to be someone she isn't, a political robot without a mind of her own. In the television interviews, her confidence, charisma, and star quality—her strengths—vanished.

But in the days before last week's debate with Joe Biden, new advisers arrived and Palin was set free—and her campaign task changed. In the debate with Biden, she had to show she understood foreign and domestic policy, could effectively tag Barack Obama as a high tax liberal and national security weakling, was ready to defend McCain and herself as reformers committed to change, and could appeal to middle class voters. She achieved all these while overpowering Biden with her personality.

The best measure of her success in the debate was this: She's been a national political figure for only a few weeks but made no serious mistakes, while Biden, a senator since 1973, committed a string of gaffes.

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In talking about the Middle East, he made "seven errors in 60 seconds," according to columnist Charles Krauthammer.

If she'd made even one or two of his mistakes, the media and the political community would have begun calling for her ouster from the McCain ticket. Biden, of course, probably won't be held accountable. That he won the debate on points, on substance, is the media's default position.

Her triumph gives her added value as McCain's partner. The question is whether McCain and his advisers will take advantage of her appeal to conservatives and to voters outside the Republican orbit. The early signs are that they will, but only up to a point.

Her public appearances, for now, are focused chiefly on the battleground states of Florida, Colorado, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and a few others. Her interviews on local TV will increase dramatically. She'll be a guest on the major conservative talk radio shows. She'll appear on Fox News. She'll be available for limited print interviews.

That, however, does not constitute the fullest and boldest use of Palin. As she demonstrated in the debate, she's smart and quick (smarter and quicker than Biden, for sure). She can handle bigger assignments, including appearances on the big-time network interview shows. She's learned the politician's trick of ignoring questions and making whatever points she wishes.

Palin, now that she's escaped her oppressive handlers, is hard to intimidate. Carl Cameron of Fox News asked her about the 18 lies that Democrats claimed she told in the debate. Anything she'd like to revise or correct? "I mispronounced General McKiernan," the commander in Afghanistan, and "I apologize for that," she said. "Other than that, nope."

She told Cameron that, with the debate out of the way, she wants to be more accessible to the media. She said she'd never been kept away from the press. "I beg to differ with the notion that I was reined in any way," Palin told Cameron. "But if there was any of that, it's over. And we got to be out there."

One more point. It's a waste of time and talent to have Palin stump jointly with McCain. Palin needs to campaign alone. She can handle it. Her crowds will probably be bigger than McCain's, but he's not likely to let his ego interfere with a strategy that improves his chances of winning the White House.

McCain should feel vindicated. His choice of Palin as his running mate has turned out extraordinarily well. There's never been a national candidate like her, a mother of five from the boondocks who grins as she skewers her opponents. More important, she's given a significant gift to McCain. She's improved his chances of winning. ♦

The Pros Lose to the Cons

Lou Dobbs replaces Milton Friedman as the face of economic conservatism. BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Remember the good old days, when the world economy hummed along and globalization seemed exciting? When President Clinton told Americans to stop what they were doing and help him build a bridge to the 21st century? When famous columnists celebrated the fact that *The World Is Flat*? Well, those days are over. The world economy is teetering. Suddenly globalization seems frightening. Construction on Clinton's bridge has been indefinitely postponed. And apparently the world is no longer simply flat. It's *Hot, Flat and Crowded*.

Future historians will spend careers arguing over when this new era began. They'll have plenty of options. But they ought to take a good look at September 29, 2008. That's the day when two-thirds of House Republicans voted to kill the Bush administration's $700 billion "financial rescue plan." The plan eventually passed Congress, but the vote on September 29 was the one that mattered. It was the day when two-thirds of House conservatives made a huge mistake. The day when Lou Dobbs replaced Milton Friedman as the face of economic conservatism.

We're used to seeing certain types of arguments among Republicans. There are fights between moderates and conservatives, neocons and paleocons, small- and big-government types, populists and elitists, insurgents and the establishment. The internal fight over the bailout bill was different. It pitted the conservatives who want to promote the international system we call "globalization"—for simplicity let's call them Pros—against those who do not. Let's call the latter Cons. This is their moment.

Globalization depends on the free worldwide flow of capital, labor, and goods. Pros want to help this flow, while Cons want to shut it off. Hence the Cons' position on free trade (against), immigration (against), and international finance (who needs it?). The leaders of the Pros are President Bush and John McCain. The leaders of the Cons are Representatives Duncan Hunter of California, Tom Tancredo of Colorado, and Ron Paul of Texas.

These are not cut and dried labels. Conservatives can be anti-immigration and pro-bailout, or pro-trade

Matthew Continetti is the associate editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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and anti-immigration. But when you look carefully enough, it's fascinating how the same folks tend to line up together on global issues again and again. You also notice how passionately they argue their point of view. There were times during the bailout debate last week when *National Review Online*'s group blog, "The Corner," resembled a rumble between the Crips and the Bloods.

The battle between the Pros and the Cons has been pronounced since 2006. Early that year the Bush administration sought to approve a deal that would have had a Dubai-owned company take over operations at major U.S. ports. This was exactly the sort of deal that you'd expect in a globalized world. Capital is supposed to cross borders with ease.

But the Dubai deal provoked a remarkable public outcry. Suddenly the federal government was "selling our ports" to foreigners. Who knew what could happen as a result? Hunter led the opposition, but the Democrats pitched in, too. A few brave souls tried to defend the global market. They cautioned that nobody was in any danger. They argued that America ought to be open to outside investment. They were totally ignored. Hunter and his allies scuttled the deal.

President Bush has continued to underestimate the power of the Cons. Soon after the Dubai ports controversy, Bush asked Congress to approve his immigration reform. America's remarkable economic performance over the last 25 years has attracted millions of immigrants. Plenty of them have entered the country illegally. Bush's reform was classic pro-globalization legislation and would have helped the American economy. It sought to stabilize the labor flow by instituting a guest-worker program and regularize the status of those immigrants who already were here.

But this was too much for plenty of House Republicans. They opposed the reform vociferously. They argued instead that the Bush administration should build a wall along America's southern border. Once again, Hunter led the opposition, and, once again, Hunter won. Bush's reform went nowhere. He failed with it again in 2007.

Two weeks ago, when Bush asked Congress to spend $700 billion buying up Wall Street's bad debts, the Cons blanched. Many of them railed against the bill as "socialism." But, contrary to popular myth, America has always had a mixed economy with elements of both the free market and interventionist government. The $700 billion, moreover, isn't going to be spent digging ditches in Nevada or bringing electricity to Appalachia. It's going to be spent buying securities that will later be sold—perhaps even at a profit.

One can argue that the administration's plan won't work, or that it won't do enough to fix the financial crisis, or that the plan that failed in the House on September 29 didn't contain enough oversight or tax breaks. One cannot argue, however, that there is no reason to support the plan. There is a big reason: the possibility that the alternative—doing nothing—may be far worse. Doing nothing could lead to a global financial meltdown. Doing nothing could mean an enduring economic recession, even depression.

That's because the real global economy of people making, selling, and buying things relies on access to credit. In a systemic banking crisis, credit can disappear. The Cons who voted against Bush's plan were willing to take that risk. They were ready to jettison the financial superstructure of globalization. They figured the costs of maintaining the system were too high. Better to let it collapse and start over again. That, after all, is what "creative destruction" is all about.

The problem with the Cons is that they underestimate the role confidence plays in the global economy. Markets rely on trust and the perception of strength. The markets need to see America taking decisive action. Otherwise they will freeze up, and

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investment will stop. It may start again eventually, as some of the Cons point out. But the cost in the meantime would be a poorer, and hence more dangerous, world.

The new politics of globalization also affects the Democrats. But their response to globalization has been far more unified. They tend to focus on the things globalization destroys (jobs, wages, economic security), while Republicans tend to be stymied by the things globalization creates (international finance, migrations, supranational and subnational identities).

During these uncertain times, Democrats have become more protectionist, more reliant on organized labor, and more willing to use state power to address inequity. They oppose further economic integration with allies like South Korea and Colombia. They are more willing to pool America's sovereignty in collective security arrangements and other diplomatic compacts. And they are less convinced that our "hard power" protects global markets and therefore undergirds global stability. The Democrats may not have the right answers to the questions that globalization brings up, but they do present a unified front.

There are still a few Pros in the Democratic party, but these days they aren't too vocal. It's a party of Cons. And that is why the fight between the Pros and the Cons in the GOP is so important. During the last quarter century the GOP has been, more often than not, the party arguing for open markets at home and abroad protected by a powerful and assertive America. It's been, in other words, a pro-globalization party.

And the consequences have been dramatic. Americans under the age of 30 wouldn't recognize a recession if it punched them in the face. The political commentator Michael Barone likes to point out that since 1983 "Americans have lived in a country that has enjoyed noninflationary economic growth 95 percent of the time." The global economy has also experienced an unprecedented prosperity during this period. About a billion people have been lifted out of poverty.

Normally, politicians would love to run on a record like this. But neither party has found a language in which they are able to describe globalization's successes. Neither party has leaders who can discuss macroeconomics and geopolitics with equal felicity, and explain to voters how the two things are related. Each party is far more likely to rely on old nostrums. Each party is tempted by inward-looking public policies. Each is ready to exploit the spectre of the "foreign."

Our allies cast a wary eye on American politics. They see that the Pros are losing to the Cons. ♦

The Truthers' New Friends

The Russian government warms up to 9/11 conspiracy theories. BY CATHY YOUNG

As the post-Georgia chill in U.S.-Russian relations continues, the Russian government has repeatedly declared its readiness to resume a friendly partnership if the United States will reciprocate and abandon its Cold War rhetoric. Yet, at the same time, Moscow has encouraged an orgy of anti-American hysteria in the loyalist Russian media. On September 12, the America-bashing reached a new low: a prime-time special on national television peddling the notion that the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks of September 11, 2001, were an inside job by American warmongers.

The special, aired in a program called *Closed Screening* on the government-controlled Channel One and viewed by up to 30 million people, was built around the documentary *Zero* made by Italian journalist and European Parliament member Giulietto Chiesa. Ignored in most of Europe and panned by the Italian press, *Zero* is a hodgepodge of familiar "truth about 9/11" claims (the Twin Towers were brought down by explosives inside the buildings, the Pentagon was hit by a missile, not a plane) accompanied by ominous music and insights from such "experts" as Nobel Prize-winning literary clown Dario Fo.

Chiesa himself, a Soviet-era Italian Communist party apparatchik and Moscow correspondent for the Communist daily *L'Unità*—who seems to have smoothly transferred his loyalty from the USSR to the corrupt state-capitalist Russia of today—was on hand for the studio discussion. He bitterly lamented his inability to find distributors in Western Europe and the United States; thank heaven Russia still allows a forum for free speech.

Since these are not quite Soviet days, there was at least a semblance of debate. Several panelists, including a building expert and (amusingly) a retired KGB analyst, rejected the conspiracy theory. Vladimir Sukhoi, a former Channel One correspondent who was in Washington, D.C., on the day of the attacks and in New York a few days later, spoke movingly of the horrors he witnessed and said that he could not "betray" those memories by lending credence to Chiesa's thesis. Sukhoi also remarked that he had personally seen debris from Flight 77 at the Pentagon, though Chiesa's coauthor, French

Cathy Young is a contributing editor to Reason *magazine.*

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9/11-conspiracy theorist Thierry Meyssan, earnestly assured him that he had not. Sukhoi listened with the patient, bemused expression of someone forced to endure the ravings of a lunatic.

But the lunatics, for the most part, were running the asylum. The discussion was heavily dominated by several pro-conspiracy panelists who dismissed the "official story" of "19 Arabs directed by Osama bin Laden in a cave" as self-evidently absurd. (The repeated gibes about "19 Arabs" prompted a sarcastic query from one of the dissenters, Middle East expert Irina Zvyagelskaya: Would 25 or 50 have been more believable?) Chiesa, who is fluent in Russian, argued that the bin Laden videotapes aired on TV "obviously" featured several different bin Laden impersonators.

The rabidly anti-American TV commentator Mikhail Leontiev matter of factly suggested that American leaders regard the mass murder of their own people as a perfectly acceptable tool for achieving foreign policy objectives and trotted out the far-right canard that Franklin Roosevelt "set up Pearl Harbor." Pundit Vitaly Tretyakov and Russian Islamic Committee chairman Geidar Jemal disagreed on whether the 9/11 attacks were engineered by a shadowy cabal of warmongers acting without the knowledge of the White House (Tretyakov) or by Bush himself (Jemal).

Several speakers bemoaned "the dearth of information" and "manipulation" in the media—the Western media, of course, not Russian television with its blacklists of opposition figures and its airing of a video doctored to suggest that a Fox News anchor tried to silence an Ossetian girl with pro-Russian views. Indeed, Western coverage of the Georgia war was predictably cited as an example of rampant bias and disinformation—the media repeating the lie of Russian aggression just as they had colluded in the 9/11 cover-up.

The host, Russian journalist and filmmaker Alexander Gordon, exuded pious concern and angst. But his bias was evident from the start when he somewhat caustically referred to guests skeptical of the Chiesa-Meyssan theory as "those completely satisfied by the official American version." The skeptics' statements were ignored or treated with thinly disguised mockery; in the last half-hour, their voices were almost completely drowned out. When Gordon asked the live studio audience how many people believed the "official version" of 9/11, not one hand went up.

Near the end of the program, Meyssan launched into an impassioned diatribe against U.S. imperialism and its evils. "Who can stop this enormous predator from ravaging the planet? We expect a great deal from you, from Russia. Only you can stop all this!" he exclaimed, to raucous applause from the studio audience.

The title page of "Closed Screening"; Thierry Meyssan behind Alexander Gordon

Closed Screening specializes in "controversial" topics, but it is unthinkable that it could have aired the film without official approval. The broadcast, as commentator Boris Sokolov noted in the independent online magazine *Grani.ru*, "proves that, at least on Russian television, the Cold War is in full progress." Two days after the program aired, appearing as a guest on Ekho Moskvy, Russia's only major politically independent radio station, Gordon was asked whether the program was linked to the new chill in U.S-Russian relations. His reply: "Maybe it is. And maybe it isn't."

Ironically, the day *Zero* aired, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev told a gathering of Western pundits that Georgia's attack on South Ossetia on August 8 was Russia's 9/11—a day when helpless Russian citizens had been murdered. (Actually, they were South Ossetians with Russian passports issued in recent years.) In view of the *Zero* broadcast, this strained analogy might be seen as an unwitting confession that Moscow had secretly engineered the clash in South Ossetia.

But not many Russians are likely to pursue this line of thought, or to ponder another troubling parallel: the fairly credible allegations that the FSB, the KGB's post-Soviet heir, was involved in the 1999 apartment-building bombings in Russia that took nearly 300 lives and were blamed on Chechen terrorists, helping generate public support for the war in Chechnya.

To their credit, some commentators even in the pro-government Russian press were appalled by the airing of *Zero*. *Izvestia* columnist Maksim Sokolov (no relation to Boris) wrote that the program "not only insults one's intelligence but is in extremely poor taste." He questioned the purpose of this calculated slap in the face to the United States at a time when U.S.-Russian relations are hardly at their best.

Besides stoking anti-Americanism in the Russian population, the purpose may have been retaliation: You won't buy our version of the war in Georgia? Fine, we won't buy your version of 9/11. But the demented circus on Channel One is a more serious matter than the political equivalent of a playground taunt. Aside from the effect inside Russia, it is likely to help spread the poison of 9/11 conspiracy theories around the world by lending them a patina of legitimacy.

So far, this insult has received no response from Washington. It should. Next time Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov meets with Condoleezza Rice, they'll have no shortage of unpleasant matters to discuss, but even so the airing of *Zero* deserves a mention. In addition to being a deliberate provocation, it is a further indication of how far Russia's masters have gone in moving the country away from the mainstream of civilized nations. ♦

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Losing the Plot

Suffering the consequences of the Narrative bacillus. BY SAM SCHULMAN

I have always wanted to go to Crete. And in two weeks, I shall carry my wife there—much as Zeus did the fair princess Europa. But as the day approaches, I find that I am longing not so much for the island ringed with the wine-dark sea, but simply to be outta here. I don't think about the wild ravines and the mountains tumbling into the still-warm water. I dream about how glorious it will be to avoid the last two weeks of the presidential campaign. Neither the journey nor the arrival matters to me—it's the departure from this election cycle.

It is not that there is anything unusually nasty or tedious about this election. If you force yourself to think about it, quite the opposite is true. This year no gray figures drone at us: no Bob Dole, no Mike Dukakis, no Phil Gramm, no Paul Tsongas, no George H.W. Bush. Instead we've had an abundance of attractive, bizarre, and original candidates—someone for everyone.

And the plot! Only a celestial collaboration between Balanchine, Feydeau, and Henry Fielding could have devised one so intricate and surprising, filled with changes of fortune, unexpected peril, family secrets, glorious oratory (and even more glorious gaffes), unhappy endings, and last-minute rescues. We should be leaving this show humming its tunes. Remember Judi Giuliani's cell phone call to Rudy? John Edwards's death-defying love affair? Mike Huckabee's unexpected charm and Mitt's unexpected charmlessness? The divine Sarah? Identity politics for every identity. And all the while, going on beneath, the nail-biting duels-to-the-end between Hillary and Obama; Joe and Sarah.

Elections are bitter things to the losers. Someone has betrayed your cause or made you realize that you are not even liked, much less well liked. Two weeks ago, late on a Monday night, I watched Hillary Clinton, wearing a pants suit in a pastel shade which would have startled even Degas, stride unrecognized through an almost empty LaGuardia terminal dragging the burden of a heavy roller bag as if it were her shroud toward the D.C. shuttle gate. Accompanied though she was by four homely bodyguards, I've never seen anyone—offstage—more alone.

If you've ever been part of a losing campaign you know how she felt. As a candidate for delegate for Frank Church in 1976, for Reuben Askew in 1984, and for the then-slender Al Gore in 1988, I know Hillary's pain. But not many of us are Askew bitter-enders or Hillary loyalists, heroes transformed by fickle voters into forgotten minor characters. So it is extraordinary that so many agree with me that, despite its objective delights, the 2008 campaign has been an overlong and joyless ordeal.

We must look to the media to understand why. A newspaper and television establishment that was on the ball would be having a ball. And it's not. Our boredom with the campaign this year is a reflection of the press's unhappiness, not of the campaign itself. The man to blame for the media's misery—and by extension, everyone's—is Evan Cornog, the associate dean of the Columbia Journalism School, a friend and a fine historian. In 2004, he published a book called *The Power and the Story*. It was a guileless act with dreadful consequences. Cornog's subtitle reveals all: "How the Crafted Presidential Narrative Has Determined Political Success from George Washington to George W. Bush." With a little help from James Carville—who used Cornog's concept, uncredited, to explain in myriad interviews how John Kerry lost an unloseable election—Cornog unwittingly infected the bloodstream of journalism with the Narrative bacillus. Now we all suffer the consequences.

Cornog, innocently, thought candidates and campaign strategists crafted the presidential narrative. Journalists misunderstood. They believe their job is to construct the presidential narrative themselves. So instead of journalism—even biased, self-blinded, incompetent, selective reporting and ill-informed, self-interested commentary—the media, from top to bottom, craft narratives. Nearly anonymous wire service cubs do narratives. Syndicated columnists, glamorous and grizzled alike, do narratives. Gwen Ifill narrates first and moderates actual debates later.

With narrative in hand, for the six long months after Iowa, the press tried to persuade Hillary to quit in the face of an Obama campaign it perceived as an invincible juggernaut. As a result, it failed to share with us the fun of an Obama campaign that only barely eked out the victories necessary to win. A different narrative in hand, just three months earlier, the media had declared Hillary the predestined Democratic nominee and prematurely interred its former darling, John McCain. Apostles who went home on Good Friday, the media didn't bother to stay for Easter.

Even now, in search of a narrative, the press constantly seeks to reveal the ending and name the hero before the story has reached its climax. Naturally, it finds itself dismayed, not excited, by new events in the actual world and changes in opinion among the real-life voters. In the campaign that takes place in real life, not narrative, new facts emerge constantly. New facts the press once upon a time called "news," which sold newspapers and grew audiences. Now, so invested are journalists in narratives that new

Sam Schulman, a writer in Virginia, is publishing director of the American.

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facts and new personalities make them anxious and unhappy, instead of eager and interesting. And that anxiety they communicate to us—fewer and fewer of us—daily.

The news industry, which has thrived for centuries as a chorus reporting what it sees, now has seized the author's job and invents the plot. No wonder the audience for newspapers and television news has been dwindling so quickly. Reporters have developed an interest in producing outcomes that conform to a necessarily predictable plot. The modern audience, despite radical technological change, remains no different from any audience ever: It craves novelty, reversals of fortune, drama—it craves news.

As for me, it is not to flee the candidates that I'm striking for the Cretan isle, but to avoid even one more narrative. The excitement will be when I return. I wonder then if I will agree with Saint Paul? "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss." ♦

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The Spirit of '76

What McCain can learn from Gerald Ford about closing a gap. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

John McCain had two good days late last week. It had been a while. On Thursday, Sarah Palin performed well enough in her debate with Joe Biden to quiet the critics. And, on Friday, the House of Representatives voted in favor of the federal bailout, which the Senate had passed two days earlier. Palin wasn't flawless and the bailout is imperfect. But three days into October, McCain finally had hope that he had stopped his September slide.

But it may not be that easy. The economy will get worse—maybe significantly worse—before it gets better. Over the next month, a series of reports on the health of the economy will be released—and none of them will be good. By a two-to-one margin voters blame Republicans for these problems.

The bad economic news has resulted in bad political news. The Real Clear Politics average of national polls has McCain trailing Barack Obama by nearly 6 points. The state polls are even more worrisome. McCain is down in Florida, down in Pennsylvania, down in Ohio, even down in Virginia. He has largely pulled out of Michigan—once believed to be a winnable light blue state—and he is fighting hard in Indiana and North Carolina, two states that Republicans win without trying in most years. On September 10, the first Gallup daily tracking poll conducted entirely after the Republican convention gave McCain a 5-point national lead. On October 3, the first day of the rest of the campaign, the same tracking poll had him down 7 points.

"As a general matter, we need to get this race back to being about Obama," says one senior adviser to McCain. A second agrees and points to Tuesday's debate as a key opportunity. "Part of what this debate is about, and the home stretch is about, is focusing the attention on Obama."

It's a strategy that has worked before. And it worked in a political environment that looks, in many ways, like this one.

In 1976, the country was still divided over an unpopular war, the U.S. intelligence community was the source of great controversy, there were deep concerns about the rising cost of energy, and the economy was in bad shape. Republican party identification was down. Democratic registration was up. The Republican running that year was a moderate, who was mistrusted by conservatives and who did not want to be associated with his predecessor. The Democrat was new to national politics and almost deified by the media. In mid-July 1976, a Gallup poll had Gerald Ford down 33 points to Jimmy Carter.

Ford's top strategists drafted a 121-page memo for the candidate. "We firmly believe that you can win in November," it declared, with an optimism that must have seemed naïve. The memo described the difficulties facing the campaign—many of which mirror the challenges Barack Obama presents the McCain campaign in 2008. Among them:

- Jimmy Carter has experienced a "rapid rise in national popularity" due largely to his "enormous (media) popularity," which persists despite the fact that he lost "eight out of the last eleven contested primary fights."
- The Democratic Party enjoys a 43% to 21% advantage. A GOP candidate will always have difficulty closing a large gap on a Democratic opponent.

Stephen F. Hayes, a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author of* Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President *(HarperCollins).*

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- Campaign expenditures for both candidates will be the same. We no longer have the previous advantage of being able to outspend our opponent. This is a particular handicap when we are behind.
- Carter's popularity is based almost exclusively on his awareness factor. His support is very thin and clearly very vulnerable to deterioration.
- It is Carter's "newness" and his image as a winner that has carried him to the heights he has reached thus far.

The memo then assessed Carter's strengths and weaknesses.

Positive

- A winner who has "it." A man with real personal appeal; "I like him."
- A man with strong spiritual and moral values; an honest man of character.
- A family man.
- A man who cares about the common man and his problems.
- A new kind of politician who is against the corrupt Washington system and will not lie.
- A man concerned about government efficiency and dedicated to making the government work better.
- A man who seems to deal with and resolve issues in a non-controversial way.
- He is seen as an economic liberal and a social conservative.
- He is a man with quiet strength; he will not let the politicians run over him. He is in control and will run the country with authority.
- Seen as a responsible Democrat—not a maverick; not extreme.

Negative

- An arrogant man.
- A man who wears his religion on his sleeve; he is very self-righteous. Lacks humility.
- A man who tries to be all things to all men; we don't know where he stands on the issues.
- A man about whom we don't know enough; we really don't know who he is as a person.
- A Southerner.
- May not be experienced enough to be President.

Ford's strategists believed that voters saw Carter as "mystical, almost evangelical," and they sought to diminish this view with "a major and highly disciplined attack on the perception of Carter." The goal was to transform his positives into negatives. They wanted Carter to be perceived as:

- An unknown. A man whose thirst for power dominates. Who doesn't know why he wants the Presidency or what he'll do with it.
- Inexperienced.
- Arrogant—(deceitful).
- Devious and highly partisan (a function of uncontrolled ambition).
- As one who uses religion for political purposes; an evangelic.
- As liberal, well to the left of center and a part of the old-line Democratic majority.

To win, Ford strategists argued, the campaign had to improve its communications by "choosing our message, simplifying it and repeating it" and by "improving the speeches and tying them to the overall strategy instead of continuing to develop speeches in an organizational vacuum."

No decision has been made as to whether the campaign will directly raise Obama's relationship to Reverend Jeremiah Wright. 'Rezko and Ayers are clearly in bounds,' says a top McCain adviser.

Ford's advisers refined their plan at a high-level meeting at Ford's vacation home in Vail, Colorado, as the campaign headed into the fall. Bob Teeter, Ford's pollster, described the meeting in an interview with a historian from the Ford Library.

"I think the basic decision we made there—and I'm not sure we focused on it quite as clearly as I can now with the advantage of twenty years of hindsight—was to shift the question [mark] off of President Ford and onto Jimmy Carter," Teeter explained.

> We raised three questions about him. One, "Was he experienced enough to be president?" Second was, "Did you know enough about him?" The third was, "Did he have enough of a record as a Governor of Georgia?"

The Ford campaign ran a series of ads featuring man-on-the-street interviews with voters discussing Carter. The criticism is mild by today's standards.

> *Woman*: All the things that we read about Jimmy Carter I think are true that he is fuzzy on a lot of the issues.
> *Man*: He changes his mind on the stand every other day or so.
> *Man*: He contradicts himself from one day to the next.
> *Woman*: He's much too wishy-washy.
> *Man*: He seems to be a little wishy-washy.
> *Man*: Well, if he'd stand up and say what he's for he'd be a little bit easier to understand and to believe.
> *Woman*: I like President Ford, a man who will tell you just exactly where he does stand.

The Ford campaign strategy almost worked. By portraying Carter as too much of an unknown and telling voters that supporting the Georgia governor was too risky in such perilous times, Ford closed the gap from 33 points to 2 in ten weeks. (Ford's convention came in the middle of that period, giving him an added boost.)

Several McCain advisers believe their campaign should focus on two very similar questions for the final push of the campaign: Who is Barack Obama, and can he lead the country in these difficult times?

The advisers say the campaign will work to remind voters of Obama's "corrupt" associations with Tony Rezko and with "the terrorist William Ayers." There has been no decision made as to whether the campaign will directly raise Obama's relationship to Reverend Jeremiah Wright. "Rezko and Ayers are clearly in bounds," says a top McCain adviser. "McCain has said he doesn't want to talk about Wright. If others do, then it's a topic of conversation and we can join that conversation."

One McCain adviser says the lessons from 1976 go beyond the campaign. "They were right about Carter. Look what happened to his presidency. We lost more acreage to communism during that time than any other time in history. And the Iranian hostages? And look at the economy."

"The guy *was* too risky." ♦

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R-e-s-p-e-c-t

The next stage in litigating same-sex marriage.

BY ROBERT F. NAGEL

As odd as it may sound, when the California Supreme Court recently declared that prohibitions against homosexual marriage violate the state's constitution, the justices acknowledged, in effect, that relatively little was at stake in the case. As the court said, California's domestic partnership law already extended to same-sex couples "all of the significant legal rights and obligations traditionally associated . . . with the institution of marriage." Thus the forms of discrimination that gay rights advocates usually complain about—involving, for instance, the right to hospital visitation, the provision of health care benefits, parental rights, and so on—were not at issue. What was at issue was whether the state could use the term "domestic partnerships" when referring to same-sex couples while using "marriage" when referring to heterosexual couples.

A naive mind might have expected that gay rights proponents and sympathetic judges would have found the California domestic partnership law a cause for celebration—a sign of significant moral progress—rather than an egregious injustice to be roughly undone by decree. Too sophisticated for such notions, the members of the California court insisted, even as they itemized all the forms of equal treatment required by that law, that the phrase "domestic partnership" created an invidious discrimination. It violated "the right of same-sex couples to have their official family relationship accorded the same dignity, respect, and stature as that accorded to all other officially recognized family relationships."

In this era of exquisite sensitivity, it might be thought cruel to call into question the importance of this kind of unequal recognition. And, even discounting for politically correct sentimentality, it is true that status does in fact matter. Nevertheless, it is obvious that use of the term "domestic partnerships" does less harm than did such prior practices as, say, using the criminal law to punish private homosexual conduct. Why, then, did unequal recognition provoke such severe condemnation by the California court?

As in so many things, Alexis de Tocqueville is edifying on this question. He wrote of "a singular principle of relative justice which is very firmly implanted in the human heart." This principle, he continued, is that "men are much more forcibly struck by those inequalities which exist within the circle of the same class than with those which may be remarked between different classes." Later Tocqueville expanded on the same thought:

> When inequality of conditions is the common law of society, the most marked inequalities do not strike the eye; when everything is nearly on the same level, the slightest are marked enough to hurt it. Hence the desire of equality always becomes more insatiable in proportion as equality is more complete.

Whether or not we accept the idea that the desire for equality becomes more intense as inequality shrinks, it does seem right that it is *because* homosexuals have achieved so much acceptance in American society, especially in California, that withholding the word "marriage" can seem to some a serious injustice. Perversely, as substantive discrimination diminishes, there is always more to be outraged about.

This principle is built into the widespread judicial practice, of which the California decision on gay marriage is only one example, of defining fundamental rights by generalizing or abstracting the rights already traditionally protected by society. The more a right has been respected by political institutions, the more likely it is that a court will declare it to be morally imperative that the right be extended beyond its existing limits. That, for example, is the basis for the U.S. Supreme Court's campaign limiting the death penalty. And, in fact, it is how homosexual sodomy became a constitutional right.

Tocqueville's "singular principle of relative justice" has some unsettling implications for the struggle over same-sex marriage. First, as the gay rights movement shifts from questions of substantive inequality to questions of respect and status, it will find that there are limits to the effectiveness of judicial remedies. It is true that—because of the public's respect for the judiciary's determinations—minority groups, including gays, have sometimes felt intense moral vindication from judicial victories. And it is also true that such groups have sometimes actually gained significant social status through lawsuits. A judicial order striking down a state statute, however, does not erase the popular opinions underlying that statute. A gay "marriage" required by court order does not necessarily indicate that the public respects or honors such marriages in the same way it respects and honors traditional marriages.

This blunt fact can be ignored or avoided by some, especially in the euphoria that accompanies major litigation victories. But as time goes by, nagging doubts about what the public actually thinks of gay marriage are likely to arise. In the case of California, where an initiative to reestablish the traditional definition of marriage will soon be put to the vote, the precariousness of judicially imposed status may become glaringly apparent.

Even in the absence of political events like the California initiative, same-sex couples will continue to be

Robert F. Nagel's most recent book is Unrestrained: Judicial Excess and the Mind of the American Lawyer *(Transaction, 2008). A version of this article appeared as a part of an Internet debate sponsored by the Federalist Society.*

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bombarded by all the cultural signals that extol heterosexual love and marriage. Indeed, now that a court has required that homosexual couples be included within the circle of marriage, such couples may feel increased sensitivity to the remaining signs that many Americans do not view homosexual marriages as being worthy of as much respect as traditional marriages.

Thus it is to be expected that judicial victories like the one in California will be followed by intensified efforts to sanitize public discourse, to eliminate the pervasive bias in favor of the familiar ideals of heterosexual romance and marriage. Libraries and schools, of course, will continue to be special targets, but the bludgeon of disapproval will gradually be extended to songs, conversations, jokes, and other informal aspects of popular culture. Of course, the ancient heritage under attack cannot be eliminated, but damage can be done. Consider a single example: On marriage licenses the rich words "husband" and "wife" will be replaced by "partner one" and "partner two." Needless to say, it would deny equal recognition to have two different marriage license forms, one retaining the old terminology and one utilizing the new.

Proponents of same-sex marriage often claim that allowing gays to marry cannot damage heterosexual marriages. They ask rhetorically, "How will allowing us to marry affect your marriage?" The California Supreme Court itself asserted, "Extending access to the designation of marriage to same-sex couples will not deprive any opposite-sex couple . . . of any of the rights and benefits conferred by the marriage statutes." But the institution of marriage is not defined or sustained only by law. It is also defined and sustained by literature, by music, by religion, and—less grandly—by the terms of ordinary conversations and everyday interactions. If same-sex marriage advocates continue to rely on courts to change the legal definition of marriage, these cultural supports will come under intensified attack. And that will harm a vitally important but already beleaguered institution. ♦

How to Win in Afghanistan

It's time to adjust the strategy.

BY CHRISTOPHER D. KOLENDA

Unemployed workers in Kabul: potential terror recruits?

How is it that we find ourselves unable to dispatch the Taliban seven years after their downfall? Winning in Afghanistan requires us to understand the changed nature of the war we are fighting and to adapt our strategy appropriately. Simply killing militants is not enough.

The war in Afghanistan is no longer purely a counterterrorism effort against al Qaeda and the senior Taliban leadership. It bifurcated long ago, and its second branch is a counterinsurgency against a range of groups who are flouting both the central government and the traditional authority of village and tribal elders and moderate mullahs. Often well funded by the Taliban or other enemies of the Afghan government and the coalition, and sometimes incorporating foreign fighters, these groups use money and guns to recruit from the vast pool of illiterate young men who see only continued poverty in the village and tribal status quo. The militants find their opportunity in the unraveling of the social and economic fabric since the Soviet invasion.

Against this shifting alliance of convenience between well-funded extremists and local malcontents, the Afghan government is fighting for its life. Historically decentralized, Afghanistan is a polyglot state made up of myriad ethnic groups and tribes. The present collapse from within,

Christopher D. Kolenda, a U.S. Army colonel, returned recently from Afghanistan, where he was a task force commander. The views expressed here are his own and do not reflect official Department of Defense policy.

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therefore, will not likely be defeated from the top down. While building up the central government is important, that effort will be in vain without a complementary effort to build systems and institutions at the local level, which can eventually be connected to the national government. Accepting and working within the decentralized reality of Afghan society is essential to defeating the insurgents.

Beyond that, the changed nature of the war makes necessary four key strategic adaptations.

(1) Increase the local and international security presence and its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities; focus on population-centric operations. More international security forces, particularly in the east and south, are crucial. The increase must be accompanied by an intensified effort to raise and develop Afghan forces. Furthermore, we must devote more intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to the contested areas. As a rule, each battalion-sized task force should have constant unmanned-aerial-vehicle and close-air-support coverage.

These forces must concentrate on protecting the population. To that end, they must build allies among the people; reduce the friction associated with the presence of foreign forces; work with local leaders to promote security in villages and on roads; promote local solutions to local problems; crush the militants when they reveal themselves; and give people compelling reasons to support the government and the counterinsurgency.

(2) Invest in bottom-up capability; attack the problem from both ends. Decentralization can be a powerful force on the side of the government if used responsibly. Afghan identity works from the inside out: Family, clan, village, and tribe are far more compelling to the individual than the nation. Afghans regard their elected village, district, and tribal *shuras* (councils) as their true representatives, not the appointed district administrators or provincial governors. Empowering these local councils to bring effective governance, basic services, and economic opportunity to their people in a manner integrated with national efforts is the best way to connect people to their government.

Local governments desperately need to draw on the expertise of civilian partners from the international community to develop durable systems relevant to everyday life. The military cannot do this alone. Ensuring these efforts are properly distributed and aligned with the national government will mitigate the very real risk of a return to the warlordism that racked the country after the Soviet war.

(3) Fix critical economic and fiscal policies at the national level. A functional economy, coupled with social and political institutions at the local level, would destroy the Taliban. The overwhelming majority of military-aged males in contested areas are unemployed outside subsistence farming. They fight for money. The economic logic of violence must change.

Afghanistan has considerable natural resources that could be harnessed to spur business and other economic growth. Sadly, national policy hamstrings efforts to do this. For instance, the timber trade has been virtually outlawed, preventing the development of local businesses while creating a black market that feeds the insurgency and resistance to the government. The underground timber economy has also resulted in significant deforestation. A smart timber policy would create incentives to manage forests in addition to generating business opportunities consonant with local interests and capabilities.

Tax policy is another study in dysfunction. According to local officials, a district is authorized to collect taxes on sales, but it must send all of the money to Kabul, which then redistributes it on the basis of perceived need. This encourages district officials to collect no taxes and claim poverty, thereby securing money from the national government. Enabling local governments to retain most of the taxes they collect, and creating systems to ensure transparency and accountability for how the money is spent, would end up bringing more money into the national coffers as well as providing better for the localities. Getting the economic and fiscal incentives right while improving local governance would also reduce the problem of government banditry.

Building systems and institutions that make local governments robust enough to earn the loyalty of their people while remaining tied to the national government is the heart of the matter in the long run. If this is done, local militant groups will die on the vine.

(4) Work with Pakistan to apply the same full-spectrum approach across the border. The socioeconomic dislocation seen in Afghanistan is similarly endemic in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Working with our allies in Pakistan to eliminate insurgent safe-havens is critical, but so is investment in local governance and development in the impoverished areas that have become breeding grounds for militants. Here too, potential recruits to the militant groups need a reason to support their government. The insurgencies must be defeated on both sides of the border in order for Afghanistan (and Pakistan) to have peace. Progress on these fronts, of course, would also support the counterterrorism campaign against the senior al Qaeda and Taliban leadership.

Afghanistan is worth winning. Adapting our strategy to the realities of the war we now find ourselves fighting would enable us to defeat the enemy's strategy and not just his forces. Strategy trumps tactics in counterinsurgency: As we saw in Vietnam and, until recently, in Iraq, we can win every battle and still watch the war slip away. Adjust the strategy, align the tactics, and we will regain the initiative in Afghanistan. ♦

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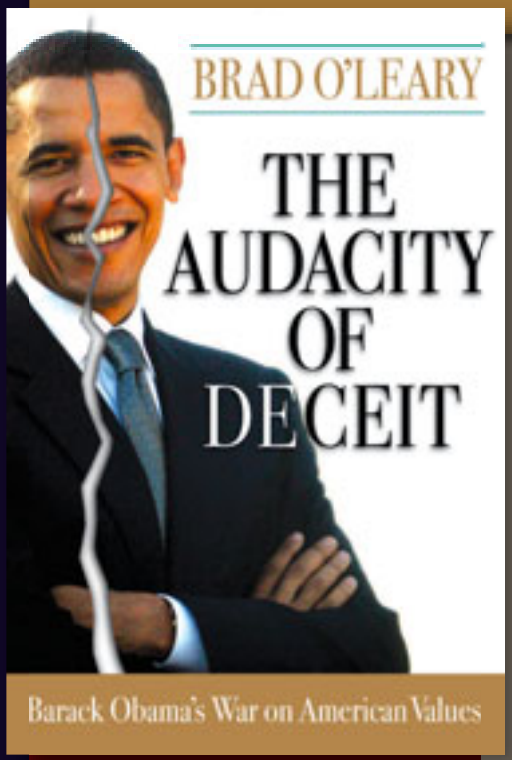

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- Do you favor or oppose increasing taxes on fossil fuels and increasing energy costs?
  61% of Americans OPPOSE!
  36% of Americans and Obama FAVOR!
- Do you favor or oppose raising the top tax rate on the self-employed from 37.9% to 54.9%?
  85% of Americans OPPOSE!
  11% of Americans and Obama FAVOR!
- Do you favor or oppose the federal government granting voting rights to ex-felons, regardless of existing state laws?
  54% of Americans OPPOSE!
  36% of Americans and Obama FAVOR!
- Do you favor or oppose spending $845 billion of taxpayer money to achieve the United Nations' goal of cutting global poverty in half?
  51% of Americans OPPOSE!
  28% of Americans and Obama FAVOR!
- Do you agree or disagree that Homeland Security should have to seek a warrant in federal court to search a non-citizen on American soil suspected of terrorism?
  56% of Americans DISAGREE!
  42% of Americans and Obama AGREE!
- Do you think Obama's plan to increase trade barriers, just as President Herbert Hoover did in the 1930s, will worsen the economy (as Hoover's did) or help the economy?
  50% of Americans say WORSEN THE ECONOMY!
  34% of Americans and Obama say HELP THE ECONOMY!
- Do you support or oppose a president who does not know when human life begins?
  55% of Americans OPPOSE!
  28% of Americans SUPPORT!

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The Demise of a Giant Hedge Fund

The old Wall Street is dead. Long live the new Wall Street!

By Andy Kessler

Before the last of Wall Street gets sold off as day-old fish on Fulton Street or washed into the East River altogether it's worth asking, what is Wall Street these days anyway?

Thanks to Dick Grasso and CNBC, most of us think of Wall Street as balding men in ugly solid-colored suits yelling at each other and throwing litter on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Not even close. They might as well be holograms from Disneyland's Haunted Mansion, just a hangover of years gone by. Or maybe Wall Street is stockbrokers, calling you at dinnertime, trying to put you into a few shares of some hot IPO. Or sleek bankers, guys (mostly) in gray Armani suits, blue shirts with white collars, and Hermès ties, jetting off to London to close some important deal. Not anymore.

So what is it? From 40,000 feet, Wall Street is about access to capital. The stock market trades every weekday, and sometimes slowly, sometimes violently, picks the economy's winners and losers. Actually, it's not the market, it's you and me, our mutual funds and pension plans, the collective "we," that do the picking via our buying and selling. It's nice to be needed. You may not even realize it, but magically, the value of companies with great prospects goes up, meaning they can raise capital much more cheaply to hire smart programmers or build another solar-panel factory. The flip side is that the price of companies doing all the wrong things (think General Motors and now Lehman Brothers) goes down, starving them of capital, a punishment for screwing up, until they disappear or do something to turn themselves around. The stock market, which is really you and me, does the dirty work of hiring and firing managers and green-lighting or killing projects. Pretty cool.

DAVE MALAN

Andy Kessler is a former hedge fund manager turned author who writes on technology and markets. His most recent book is The End of Medicine.

On the street level, of course, Wall Street is a lot nastier. After 20 years in the business, when I think of Wall Street, I think of alpha dogs generating revenue however they can: getting deals done, fighting for market share against all the other firms, and then at the end of the year, on the inside of their firms, unsheathing the political knives to carve up the ever growing bonus pool, and maybe also carve up each other. Wall Street is really just a compensation scheme. Firms generate sales, and employees get half the money. Yes, half. The rest, after expenses goes to shareholders. Sweet deal.

Back in the days of private partnerships, White Weld or Brown Brothers or even Morgan Stanley, that was fine. They traded stocks and made good money. They offered advice on mergers and acquisitions and got paid handsomely. But in August 1983, the stock market and the U.S. economy took off. So did mutual funds. And Silicon Valley. And biotech. And a massive service economy. More capital was needed to fund the growth of great companies Think of all the technology companies that didn't even exist in 1983.

Wall Street partners had to pay for memberships in Greenwich country clubs, so partnerships couldn't retain much earnings. They needed to tap those same public markets, and so went public to raise huge buckets of capital to help their clients. What a great 25-year run!

A very subtle change ruined the party. The same PC and Internet technology that was sweeping corporate America and getting rid of tellers and travel agents and secretaries and typesetters was also invading Wall Street. No one needed a broker anymore—you could do it all online. Traders at firms were being replaced by electronic trading systems that were faster, cheaper, and don't show up late for work after taking clients out to Smith & Wollensky's.

By 2002, Wall Street firms, despite being flush with huge balance sheets of capital to generate returns with,

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were no longer making money in their bread and butter business of stock and bond trading, investment banking, and money management. The one group making money were these weird guys with math Ph.D.s creating exotic securities, derivatives, pieces of paper backed by pools of assets, maybe airplane leases, or home mortgages. The neat thing about derivatives is that no one but the person who created them knows what they're worth, so you can sell them at huge markups. Woo-hoo. Mammoth departments were created all over Wall Street to securitize everything that moved. With the Fed forcing low interest rates in 2002-2004, the higher the yield the better.

Subprime home mortgages, because of higher risk (ooh, don't say that word), had high yields and moved to the top of the list. When not enough of these loans could be bought from banks, firms like Bear Stearns and Lehman set up entire loan-origination subsidiaries, and in true Wall Street style were aggressive and rose to the top of the market-share tables. If you want to know why Wall Street CEOs made so much, it wasn't from trading your 1,000 shares of Apple stock.

Still, those profits weren't enough. Their customers were making great money buying Wall Street's derivatives. But why should banks and pension funds and hedge funds have all the fun? What a perfect use for all that capital on their huge balance sheets and cheap financing from low interest rates. Wall Street, en masse, started buying all these high yielding derivatives for their own account. They ate their own dog food, if you will.

It was the easy trade. Borrow at 3 percent and make 6 percent or 8 percent or 10 percent. They liked it so much, they levered up. Meaning instead of just borrowing a dollar for every two dollars of assets they owned (which by the way, thanks to the 50-percent margin requirement, is the amount of leverage that you and I are allowed to buy stocks from these same firms), they borrowed 20 to 1, 30 to 1, and even 50 to 1, if they could get away with it. And man, it was a lucrative trade. So why not?

I'll tell you why not. Because all of a sudden, Wall Street is no longer a business of traders or stock brokers or investment bankers, it's a giant hedge fund. And they have no idea what they are doing. None. I ran a hedge fund for a lot of years and learned rather quickly that if a trade was too good, if everyone was doing the same trade, then I should absolutely turn around and run for the hills. But no one on Wall Street did. The spreadsheets flashed green. Risk was a four-letter word best not said in polite company.

Wall Streeters became hedge fund cowboys and loved the spoils, until a tiny little downturn in housing sent everyone rushing to get out of the pool at the same time. Deleveraging a balance sheet leveraged at 30 to 1 is not easy or pretty when everyone is doing it along with you. And this is not the customer panic-selling and paying fees to Wall Street, it's Wall Street doing the selling, pushing prices into the irrational range and turning companies belly up overnight.

Bear Stearns gone. WaMu too, into the belly of J.P. Morgan. Wachovia into Wells Fargo. Fannie and Freddie are the new U.S. Department of Mortgages and are closing their K Street offices. Lehman is dust in the wind. AIG in the penalty box. Merrill Lynch is a subsidiary of Bank of America, which barely survived their purchase of Countrywide Mortgages and, the word is, they won't change their name to Lynch America Countrywide. They should.

And horror of horrors, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley are now bank holding companies. Yeah sure, free toaster jokes are flying, but the net effect is they will now be restricted to 10: or 12:1 leverage, instead of 30.

There is plenty of finger pointing to go around. You can blame the Fed for low interest rates, rating agencies for putting AAA ratings on garbage loans, the SEC, short sellers, monoline debt insurers, lying borrowers, mark to market accounting—heck, let's blame the Chinese for lending us our own dollars.

When running money, I bought plenty of stocks only to see the company screw up and the stock drop. I could try to blame the company, but my investors would blame me. And rightly so. It was nobody's fault but mine. The buck stops at the management of these firms for chasing a bad trade and not sticking to their bread and butter businesses.

Is this the end of Wall Street? More like the start of a new one. At the end of the day, Wall Street is not about the names on the door, it's about the people inside. There were great people at Lehman and Enron, Bear Stearns and AIG. Those who have a nose for making money will join other firms, or hedge funds, or start their own shop. Still, I'm pretty sure that half of those employed on Wall Street in 2007 will be doing something else by January.

And the new Wall Street? There's only one direction. It's back to basics. Not quite back to the old white shoes-blue blood partnerships of the past but certainly that business model. With a lot less capital, sit on the edge of the stock market and provide access to capital for the next set of great companies. Take 'em public, bank 'em, and grow with 'em. It may not be as exciting as the last few years, but it beats getting dumped in the East River. ♦

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The Buddha

About Your Professor

Dr. Malcolm David Eckel is Associate Professor of Religion at Boston University. He earned his Masters in Theology at Oxford and Ph.D. in the study of comparative religion at Harvard. In 1998, Professor Eckel received the Metcalf Award for Teaching Excellence, his university's highest award for teaching.

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Where the Jews Vote Republican

One thing Israelis and Palestinians can agree on is that Obama is bad news.

By Willy Stern

Ramallah and Sderot

My Palestinian driver insists we stop by Arafat's tomb to pay our respects. He explains the etiquette: Visitors can either say a prayer or salute. On the 45-minute drive north to Ramallah from Jerusalem, he had referenced the "f—ing Jews" so quickly and often that I figured there was no upside to disclosing my own Jewish heritage. I'm just another American scribe on a day-trip to the West Bank, wondering how to deal with the late PLO leader. At the tomb, I quietly mutter under my breath a Jewish prayer in Hebrew—the "Sh'ma" for you chosen people keeping score at home. Crisis avoided; we are back on the road.

Next stop in downtown Ramallah is the hoity-toity Plaza Mall. Inside is a fabulous supermarket that rivals the Kroger where I shop in my hometown of Nashville. The deep piles of fresh fruit—mostly imported from Israel with Hebrew lettering on the boxes—are impressive, as is the array of fresh fish. The children's indoor play space upstairs has a bumper-car arena.

New, chic apartment buildings with commanding views are being thrown up on the hillsides. My driver takes me up a steep hill to view what he calls a "million-dollar home" under construction at the top. There are signs of poverty around but clearly not everyone in the West Bank fits neatly under the umbrella of "oppressed." It turns out that there is a stock market in Nablus (it's called the Al-Quds Index), and it's outperforming the Dow.

I'm in Ramallah to try to find someone—anybody will do—who's supporting Barack Obama for president. The theory is that even if Israel remains an overwhelming red state, at least the Palestinians may have some sympathy for the junior senator from Illinois. After all, the one thing that Israelis and Palestinians can agree on is that George W. Bush has been the most pro-Israel U.S. president ever. This fact, it is widely assumed here, pushes Palestinian voters towards Obama, whilst driving Jews to line up solidly behind McCain.

This hypothesis is certainly espoused by Hanna Siniora, a soft-spoken and reflective Palestinian who is co-CEO of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, a left-tilting think tank in Jerusalem. "The Palestinians are nauseated with Bush," he reports. "Plus if your middle name is Hussein, well that's not a negative in this neighborhood."

Because Obama is black, Siniora adds, many Palestinians feel that he will sympathize with their plight, as fellow oppressed people. Siniora predicts that 80 percent of adults in the West Bank support Obama, and 99 percent in the more radicalized Gaza Strip. In April, Hamas political adviser Ahmed Yousef told WABC Radio, "We like Mr. Obama, and we hope he will win the election." Even though the endorsement was later rescinded, it's not the type of backing Obama is seeking as he tries to woo the Goldsteins of Boca Raton and the Ginsbergs of Shaker Heights.

To test the theory, I go to see Ramallah's top pollster, Khalil Shikaki. He has a Ph.D. from Columbia University, writes op-eds for the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and has taught at Brandeis. Shikaki runs the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research out of his office in a well-appointed building atop a Subaru dealership. The building wouldn't be out of place in downtown Tulsa. He has recent polling data on Obama. A late August survey indicated that a scant 9.9 percent of Palestinians thought an Obama presidency would have a "positive effect" on the Palestinian question. Apparently, the "audacity of hope" mantra doesn't fly in Arabic.

Willy Stern, a Nashville-based writer, has reported from six continents.

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John McCain prays at the Western Wall in Jerusalem in March 2008.

PAVEL WOLBERG / EPA / CORBIS

Shikaki said he hadn't expected "such a large percentage of negative results" for Obama. He supposes that Palestinians—whether they are Fatah supporters in the West Bank or Hamas supporters in Gaza—think both American candidates are heavily biased in favor of Israel and therefore equally bad.

Shikaki is aware of comments from Obama that appear to paint the Democratic candidate as being more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause than is McCain. At a Democratic primary debate, Obama said "nobody has suffered more than the Palestinian people," and he told the *Atlantic* the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a "constant wound" and "constant sore" that "infect[s] all our foreign policy" and "provides an excuse for anti-American Jihadists."

Such positions didn't go down well with American Jewry, and Obama backed off them in his well-publicized AIPAC speech in early June. The late Milton Himmelfarb famously said that Jews "earn like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans." Democratic candidates typically pull at least 65 percent of the Jewish vote in any presidential race. Kennedy, Johnson, Humphrey, and Clinton broke the 80 percent barrier. Bush, the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House, grabbed a meager 19 percent (2000) and 24 percent (2004) of Jewish voters. The latest Gallup Poll gives Obama 66 percent of the Jewish vote: not great, but comparable to Mondale's and Dukakis's tallies.

In Israel, though, it's an entirely different matter. "Israel is the only place on the globe in which the public genuinely likes the Bush administration," notes Shlomo Brom, a retired Israeli brigadier general who studies national security issues at Tel Aviv University's Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies. "McCain is widely seen as an extension of Bush by the Israeli electorate." No one should be surprised that Obama trailed McCain 38 percent to 31 percent in a late July poll of Jewish Israelis. (In May, McCain was up 43 percent to 20 percent over Obama.)

"We respect war heroes in Israel, especially those like

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In the kitchen of a home being rebuilt after a rocket attack, Sofhi Cohen says that she's 'quite surprised' and 'disappointed' to hear that American Jews prefer Obama. 'Obama seems nice, but he's like a child.'

McCain who were POWs," notes Mitchell Barak, managing director of the Jerusalem-based Keevoon Research, Strategy & Communications. "We see Obama fantasizing about how he wants to sit down and talk to the terrorists, and he loses a lot of Israelis right there. He comes off as unrealistic and insensitive to the existential challenges facing the Jewish state, and as naïve."

Naïve, indeed. It's a theme that popped up frequently when I mentioned Obama's name. Obama lacks experience. Obama doesn't understand how to deal with terrorists in general, and radical Islamic terrorists in particular. Obama thinks a court of law is the right forum for dealing with terrorists. Obama thinks the U.N. is a dandy place to solve difficult problems. Obama would have happily lost the Iraq war. Obama would cede regional hegemony to the Iranians. And so on.

Most Israelis, who live daily with the threat of terrorism, simply don't trust Obama. Take the residents of Sderot, a smallish Israeli city perched half a mile from the Gaza Strip. Since 2001, 7,000-8,000 rockets have rained down on Sderot from Gaza. Fifteen Israelis have died in these attacks and more than 600 have been wounded. Mayoral aide Shalom Halevi points out that Hamas aims the rockets at Sderot's schools and shoots them over just before the school day with the intent of killing or terrorizing children walking to school.

Sofhi and Eli Cohen reside at the quiet end of a street named Derech HaAliyah on the northwest edge of Sderot. On the morning of May 10, a Qassam rocket sailed through their back wall, blowing up a good portion of their two-story house. As luck would have it, nobody was killed, though two of the Cohens' four children were injured.

"Everybody in Sderot prefers McCain to Obama," explains the soft-spoken Sofhi, as she bakes in her kitchen on a Friday afternoon. Despite the fact that her house has been blown to bits and her husband is outside working on the repairs, she has graciously invited me to join her family for the Sabbath meal. "McCain understands terrorists and how to deal with them," she says. She's "quite surprised" and "disappointed" to hear that American Jews prefer Obama. "Obama seems nice, but he's like a child."

And for those who live with terrorists just down the road, a child clearly won't do in the White House. "Obama is young, charismatic, and smart," says Eli Moyal, the straight-talking mayor of Sderot, who has met with both candidates. "But McCain's a more serious guy." The mayor's message to American Jews: If you care about Israel's security, vote for McCain.

Obama supporters turn up in Israel in all the usual places—the media, the universities, etc. Typical among Israeli leftists is the delightful Colette Avital, a Labor member of the Knesset who speaks seven languages, has a Harvard degree, and spends her days sincerely worried about feeding poor Israeli kids who may go to bed hungry. "Bush has screwed up the Middle East and has lost America what little clout it had in the Arab countries," she explains. "Maybe Obama would bring more imaginative thinking to the peace process, towards dealing with Iran and the other issues which matter to us."

Then there's Dani Ben-Simon, a longtime lefty columnist at *Haaretz*, who is leaving journalism for politics. He believes that George W. Bush did Israel a "great disservice" by his unwavering support of the Middle East's only true democracy. Why? Because Bush was too "friendly" towards Israel and didn't push Israelis towards the "objective thinking" that would have helped them realize that they, too, are a superpower and can afford to reach settlements with the Palestinians and the Syrians. Ben-Simon believes that, despite their military superiority, many Israelis suffer from what he terms the "Warsaw ghetto mentality" and fear that their destruction could be imminent.

Such is the thinking of Obama supporters in Israel. There's no Bush hatred. There are oodles of decency and much intellectualism. Nonetheless, many of their fellow Israelis think they are daft.

The leaders of all three of Israel's major political parties—Labor, Kadima, and Likud—prefer McCain but they don't dare say so publicly, reports chain-smoking political consultant Eyal Arad. Why not? Because, explains Arad, they know they might have to deal with Obama for the next four years. "Israelis fear the unknown and Obama represents the unknown," explains Saul Singer, longtime editorial page editor of the *Jerusalem Post*, now on book leave. Danny Ayalon, the Israeli ambassador to the United States from 2002 to 2006,

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elaborates, "We all know McCain. When the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke, he called me and said, 'Danny, what's Israel's policy on torture?' We don't have those relationships with Obama, yet."

Expat Americans in Israel are also largely right-leaning. Kory Bardash, a former Goldman Sachs analyst who is now chairman of Republicans Abroad in Israel, predicts that McCain will get more than 75 percent of the vote among Americans living in Israel. He wants it to have an impact, too. Bardash is specifically targeting absentee voters who are registered back home in the swing states of Ohio, Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

On my way back from Ramallah to Jerusalem, my driver had to take us through one of the controversial checkpoints that Israel set up to keep suicide bombers and snipers from murdering Israeli citizens. Because of the new security fence, which separates the Jews from their Palestinian neighbors, everybody must pass through one of these checkpoints when moving in or out of the West Bank.

My driver and I were a profiler's nightmare. He was fairly young, male, and Palestinian. We left Ramallah in a Palestinian taxi with Palestinian plates. We stopped outside the city so the driver could buy a small table. (Prices are cheaper for most items in the West Bank than in Israel.) The driver stuffed the table in the car's trunk, which was not opened by the Israeli guards though it could easily have contained a bomb. We waited at the checkpoint for less than a minute before being waved through. So much for the supposed inhumane queues which the anti-Israel media enjoy touting.

And it is not as though security is lax. The fence-and-checkpoint combination has done its job. In 2002, there were 234 terrorist attacks launched from the West Bank, claiming 62 lives. Last year, there were no successful attacks. It's a security success story, despite the way the fence and the checkpoints have been portrayed by some in the Western media. And that contrast helps explain the Israeli preference for McCain.

WILLY STERN

Eli Cohen is rebuilding his house in Sderot. A Qassam rocket sailed though his back wall in May, injuring two of his children.

"As a humanitarian, I am delighted that Obama has become America's first black presidential candidate," says Israel Harel, founder of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. "And if my main concern wasn't Israel's existence, I would vote for Obama. But, because Obama is closer emotionally to the Third World—also the Arab world—I would vote for McCain because that would be a vote for a secure Israel and therefore, a vote for securing the existence of the Jewish people."

When your back is to the wall, sweet-sounding platitudes ring just a little empty. ♦

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Andrew Mellon (second from right), patron of the National Gallery of Art, 1932

Good for Art

Money helps, and talent too

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

After reading Marjorie Garber's *Patronizing the Arts*, I conclude that the ideal arts patron is a shy, retired Mafia don without the least interest in art: in other words, a rich man who prefers not to discuss the source of his wealth, would never wish to push himself forward for publicity, could not care less about what an artist does with his money, and is content to walk away quietly with his tax write-off in his suitcoat pocket just above his shoulder holster. Professor Garber, chairman of something called the Visual and Environmental Studies Department at Harvard, and the author of books on cross-dressing and bisexuality, concludes otherwise.

Patronizing the Arts
by Marjorie Garber
Princeton, 272 pp., $24.95

Professor Garber describes all but the last few pages of her book as a chronicle of "patronage and its discontents." As her book makes clear, no perfect patronage exists, certainly not in the arts, which offer special problems to any patron and not a few to artists. Patronage in the arts tends to illustrate the cynical proverb that holds no good deed goes unpunished. Although generally sucked up to, by artistic institutions and by artists, patrons, in the restricted sense of men and women who come up with money to help make the creation or performance or display of art possible, have been mocked at least since the days of Samuel Johnson. After his rocky experience with his own patron, Lord Chesterfield, Johnson in his *Dictionary* famously defined the patron as "com-

Joseph Epstein, a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author of the forthcoming* Fred Astaire.

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monly a wretch who supports with indolence, and is paid with flattery."

Professor Garber's general view of the arts, like her language, is that found in most humanities departments in the contemporary American university. She finds "paradigm shifts" and spreading "commodification," avails herself of such hideous words as "contestation" and "misprision," and makes little jokes that only students, that most hopelessly captive of audiences, might find amusing. As for her taste in art, she likes it, in good academic fashion, hot and edgy, challenging and confrontational. She even continues to believe, quaintly enough, that there still exists something called the avant-garde, unmindful that, as Paul Valéry long ago said, "everything changes but the avant-garde."

Owing to her entrenched views, Professor Garber's survey of the history of patronage in the arts is perforce tendentious. In her book the required contempt for government support for the arts under Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush is nicely in place. The fear of being left behind by art—to end up one of those dunces who scratched at Matisse's early paintings or broke chairs at the first performance of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*—haunts her pages, so that she appears to feel that nearly everything in art that is new is, *ipso facto*, also to be applauded. She takes the opinion of the world ("that great ninny," as Henry James once called it), or at least that of the art world, as the final arbiter on aesthetic matters. Andy Warhol, for example, is for her a great artist, case long ago closed.

Because of these general views, *Patronizing the Arts* has a cowboys and Indians, good guys and bad guys quality. As in a low-grade Hollywood movie, with Professor Garber, you always know for whom to root and whom to boo. Some figures who cross her screen are, to be sure, worth booing, or at any rate being suspicious of. She is perfectly correct, for example, to question the depth of love for art on the part of such corporations as Philip Morris, Absolut Vodka, and ExxonMobil in sponsoring the various artistic projects and events they do. The question here, obviously, isn't what's in it for the talent but what's in it for the corporation. The answer, just as obviously, is high-sheen public relations for companies that feel themselves much in need of it.

But more often Professor Garber's cowboys and Indians approach merely coarsens a richly complex subject. Not least among its complexities is the real relation between patron and artist. When patron meets artist, artist patron, what does each think? Does the patron, if only to himself, ask, "If you're so smart, how come you're not rich?" And does the artist, in his turn, ask, "If you're so rich, how come you're not smart?"

We know what the artist is getting out of the relationship: First and foremost, funds to begin, carry on, or complete his work. Not uncommonly, taking the funds comes with strings—even ropes, on occasion handcuffs—attached. My friend Samuel Lipman, who grew up as a piano prodigy in San Francisco, had as his patroness the daughter of the woman who was the patroness of Yehudi Menuhin. For her monthly stipend, which Sam's parents used for his piano instruction and out-of-classroom tutoring, she put him through his paces, having him over regularly to play for the amusement of her friends and never hesitating, in brusque fashion, to correct his table manners.

Isidore Lipschitz painting for the WPA, ca. 1937

BETTMANN / CORBIS

The patron's rewards are more subtle. They run from acquiring a reputation for generosity and, possibly, for artistic sensitivity, to the cachet of what passes for culture in capital-S Society, to perhaps moderate relief from guilt for wealth ill-got, to the obvious, frequently overlooked motive of simple honorable altruism. Professor Garber does not seem much interested in the complexities of this relationship.

Neither is she much aware of the ironies with which her subject is so heavily laden. A few years ago Mrs. Ruth Lilly, of the Lilly pharmaceutical family, died and left a bequest to *Poetry* magazine of more than $100

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million, a fact Professor Garber mentions without further comment. Yet this testamentary piece of wildly extravagant patronage could well end in setting the traditionally modest and historically significant Chicago journal well off course. *Poetry* and the Poetry Foundation, I think it fair to say, don't know what to do with so much money—an actual embarrassment of riches. I have myself received mailings—sent, I gather, to a great many people—surveying me on how best it might be spent.

Everyone is stumped, and with good reason. The undirty little secret here is that it will take more than enormous infusions of money to make even quite well-educated and bookish people care about contemporary poetry, for the only people who do currently care are those who write or teach it. What is needed are great poets, and nobody knows how to make them; mountains of cash, fairly safe to say, won't do the job.

Upon emerging from the old Museum Theatre in Boston after a ballet, Ralph Waldo Emerson is supposed to have said to Margaret Fuller, "This is art!" Miss Fuller is said rapturously to have replied, "Ah, Mr. Emerson, this is religion!" And so art is, for many people, religion by other means.

Professor Garber appears to be one of the parishioners of the good Church of Our Lady of Art. For her art is a purely approbative word, and not merely a noun that permits many adjectives to reside beside it, among them: trivial, highly politicized, wretched, dreary, and simply crappy. Nor does she seem keenly aware that all these latter kinds of art appear to be in exceedingly great supply just now, with almost no demand for any of them, even though such art wins prizes and its creators are solemnly wreathed in honors and weighted down with gold.

Not only contemporary poetry but most contemporary serious music has failed to find an appreciable—let alone appreciating—audience. Much new visual art has attracted market attention, some of it selling for prices that can only puzzle those of us who fail to see anything in it other than the comic contradictions that arise when culture meets capitalism.

When other explanations are wanting, one can't go wrong blaming America. Professor Garber points out that the Dutch, the French, and the Germans, among other European countries, spent greater sums per capita on state-sponsored patronage of the arts than does the United States. But then, traditions of art patronage in American life had, until the Depression, been thought mainly a private matter; the guardianship of high culture—masterpiece paintings and sculpture, orchestral music, ambitious architecture—was assumed to be among the responsibilities of the rich. This was, let it be said, a responsibility that, in the years between the 1870s and 1890s, the American rich did not eschew, building and stocking the country's great art and scientific museums and symphonic halls, and starting many of its important universities.

When patron meets artist, artist patron, what does each think? Does the patron, if only to himself, ask, "If you're so smart, how come you're not rich?" And does the artist, in his turn, ask, "If you're so rich, how come you're not smart?"

Only with the Depression, which brought into being the Works Progress Administration, whose function was to invent work for artists—allowing painters to do murals in public buildings, writers to indite state guide books—did the United States government get into the arts in a major way. The WPA ended with World War II. In 1965, with the advent, by act of Congress, of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the relationship between artists, the arts, and the government became complicated.

The tendency of the National Endowment for the Arts has not been at all to Professor Garber's taste. In recent years it has ceased giving grants to artists—with the exception of writers—and has expended its funds chiefly on institutions and programs, many of them bringing Shakespeare, ballet, and other traditional artistic wares to rural communities and other places where they are not usually available. The agency's modus operandi, Professor Garber finds, has been to seek consensus; its goal is, in her words, "to do no harm." She prefers harm, lashings and slashings, with ample money going to artists who don't in the least mind sticking it in the ear of the public, not least their patrons, the United States government.

I was a member of its National Council, or policy setting body, for six of the stormiest years in the NEA's history, from 1984-90. This was a time when the counterculture had become, in the arts at least, the mainstream culture. The result was that much art was of the in-your-face kind, especially in the visual arts and performing arts. These were the years of performance artists smearing their naked bodies with chocolate, photographs of men with plungers stuck in their rectums, crucifixes set afloat in bottles of urine, paper-towels smeared with HIV-positive blood sent skimming out on pulleys over the heads of audiences—all done either directly with the aid of NEA money or under the roofs of institutions funded by the NEA.

How very different from the old avant-garde—that extending from the French impressionists through Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso, and Arnold Schoenberg—a movement having chiefly to do with changing

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technique in the arts. But the avant-garde in the 1980s had turned largely political: It was about one form or another of ethnic or sexual liberation, of protest and leftwing politics. Its chief message tended to run: I'm an outraged gay or lesbian—or an angry black man, or an aging sixties radical—and I've had it with this detestable bleeping country, with its middle-class respectability, its vaunting of the family, its organized religions, its censorship, and hideous capitalist system. And by the way, nice to learn that I've been awarded an NEA grant, and when do you suppose I might receive my check?

Art is a house with many mansions, also garages, grease pits, small but real slums. Art can be wild, extravagant, offensive, obscene, vile, exhibitionistic, sado-masochistic, filled with political rage, outrageous—it can be all of these things and more. And no one is saying it shouldn't be what the artist feels the need for it to be, though none of this is my particular idea of a good time. But once artists take federal or state—that is, taxpayers'—money, they are under an obligation to be, at a minimum, not directly insulting. If they feel the need for their art to go on the attack—against the customs and institutions of their country—then logic and decent manners suggest they are under the obligation to create it on their own nickel.

The other problem the NEA encountered was that of democracy itself. Art isn't about democracy; it is an elitist activity. Place the word "mediocre" before the word "art" and it isn't any longer art. Yet so much in the funding arrangements of the NEA encouraged mediocrity. Affirmative action was, of course, a great blow for mediocrity in the arts—even NEA peer panels, which recommended grants, were put together along affirmative action lines—for the NEA was committed to helping the disadvantaged, which meant awarding grants to all putative victim groups.

Then there was the grubby political element to consider. A fellow member during my days on the National Council was a Florida state senator who couldn't tell a Picasso from a puffin, but saw it as his mission to make sure that Florida got its fair share of federal arts money, whether or not genuine artists or serious artistic institutions existed in the Sunshine State. And why not? Tax dollars come from taxpayers, so why shouldn't everyone get his fair demographic share?

Late in *Patronizing the Arts*, Professor Garber compares federal spending on the arts with current funding for science, or Big Science, as it is now sometimes called, next to which spending on the arts is of course puny. She argues that much science is artistic and art is itself becoming more scientific.

But the comparison doesn't hold up. The difference between science and art is that science is progressive, art is not; science is a collective activity, one generation building on the ones that came before, with a generally agreed upon agenda of what are the great problems that need solving. Artists don't solve problems; they work out their visions. And every artist is in business for himself and sets his own agenda. Scientists will tell you that, though Galileo, Newton, and Einstein were of course great geniuses, if they had never been born other scientists would have come along and eventually made their discoveries. But Marcel Proust, and with him all other major artists, was *sui generis*; no one else could have written *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.

Professor Garber is attracted to the analogy of art with science in part because so much of science is done in universities and her book's closing argument is that the best possible patron for the arts is now the contemporary university. She makes the point that, increasingly, much training in the arts is done in universities in departments of theater and acting, visual art, film and photography, music, dance, and creative writing. (When one thinks of all the would-be poets and novelists being churned out by university creative-writing programs, one begins to understand what Degas meant when he said that "we must discourage the arts.") Professor Garber argues that the arts would be good for the university, but the greater question is whether the university is good for the arts?

My sense is that it would not. Professor Garber writes that "freedom of expression, the toleration of difference, and the high value placed on originality and imagination" are all found in the university. Wonder how, in my 30 years there, I seem to have missed it, and found instead deep conformity, beginning with political correctness and extending outward into anti-Americanism and a hardy loathing for anyone not aligned with all the okay causes.

This conformity cannot be good for artists or for their arts. When one thinks of the powerful critics of the arts in the past century, the best among them—Edwin Denby in dance, Virgil Thomson in music, Clement Greenberg in visual art, Edmund Wilson in literature—almost all came from outside the university. Apart from actors and a few playwrights, most serious novelists, poets, composers, and painters did not acquire their training, or their inspiration, from the university, and fewer still found their subject matter there. The great world, not the university, will always be the ultimate training ground for artists, at least for those who wish to go beyond the academic in their ambitions.

Even with the great good luck of generous patrons, the artist is left where he has always been: attempting to master his craft, trying to narrow the gap between his talent and his ambition, alone with his mad passion, ill-rewarded if rewarded at all—a grant here, a small prize there—hoping to make a little dent in the world's great yawning indifference.

Think of his travail from time to time, and pray that your son or daughter doesn't come to you to announce that he or she wishes to be an artist. ♦

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Sin No More

Apologies differ, and so do the reasons to apologize.

BY JUDY BACHRACH

Naturally, one opens *The Art of the Public Grovel* with great expectations, especially since the subtitle is as full of promise as a bikini and the smell of banana oil. Or, for that matter, a well-snapped thong—an image adumbrated by a cover photo of Bill Clinton, his face flushed with what appears to be embarrassment.

The Art of the Public Grovel
Sexual Sin and Public Confession in America
by Susan Wise Bauer
Princeton, 352 pp., $26.95

Susan Wise Bauer, like the sinners whose sexual foibles and public stabs at repentance she details at considerable length, seems to promise a lot of fun: love, license, weaseling, smarmy rhetoric, and lots and lots of self-abasement. And better still: Guess which groups the lustful weasels belong to? Politicians and clergy! True, this book was completed months before Big Bad John Edwards had a chance to cop to "narcissism" (a new synonym for messing around with Jay McInerney's cast-offs). But we can't really expect our sexual biographers to be any better at timing the market than, say, Wall Streeters.

Besides, these days, sexual history books masquerading as serious reading matter usually offer better returns. So imagine the depths of my disappointment when, on turning to page 90, I read Bauer's unusual take on why Edward Kennedy found his presidential hopes dashed when his car plunged into the channel at Chappaquiddick and the young woman who was his passenger drowned. It was a fairly consequential tragedy that had, as it happens, little to do with sex. At least that wasn't the gist of the problem. Following the incident, Senator Kennedy returned to his motel room, quite intact, having somehow failed that night to ring the police:

> [H]e had swum away and summoned his lawyers as she drowned. His failure to admit moral responsibility demonstrated that he had almost no understanding of *why* his public needed to hear his confession. His constituency needed to see that Kennedy, whose political power was intensified by his position as senior member of a powerful political dynasty, would not use that power to oppress. Kennedy needed . . . to show that he was on the side of the common man.

Actually, the most important thing that Kennedy needed to show back then was why he shouldn't be charged with involuntary manslaughter. Confession—penitent open confession, which Bauer thinks perfectly wonderful and an excellent emollient for the career of the famous—might have given the senator a gold star from the author, but it also would likely have given him a rap sheet, which outside of the District of Columbia isn't a proven vote-getter.

As for the desires of "the common man," another favorite Bauer topic, since it is her contention that ordinary folk like to see their leaders cop to plebeian sins: The national electorate didn't disdain Kennedy because he refused to confess to sexual weakness; they were kind of worried about the senator's failure to recall how to dial the police.

And that's the real trouble with *The Art of the Public Grovel*. Bauer is so excited about the connection in American public life between sexual acts and confession—she thinks you can't have one without the other, and basically implies that a well-worded declaration of guilt is usually a get-out-of-jail-free card—that she lumps all sins, however puny or destructive, together. Adultery and an archbishop's tolerance of child abusers, for instance. Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, who watched prostitutes undress, and *PTL* preacher Jim Bakker, who fleeced his followers *and* messed around on Tammy Faye of the spidery eyelashes. Teddy K drying himself off in his motel room, and Jimmy Carter idiotically confessing (in *Playboy* of all venues, and during an election!) to harboring lust in his heart.

Launching this motley array of sinners is President Grover Cleveland (1885-89, 1893-97), about whom readers today possibly harbor very little interest. Yes, the guy fathered a child out of wedlock, an unsettling revelation particularly as it erupted in the midst of his campaign—"Ma, Ma, where's my Pa?" was how Republicans greeted his stump appearances—but no, he didn't discuss the issue in public, much less confess his sins to anyone, except to admonish his supporters to "tell the truth."

Jimmy Swaggart, 1988

ROB NELSON / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

And that's how he won a presidential election.

Clearly this resolute refusal to

Judy Bachrach is a contributing editor to Vanity Fair.

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grovel, which nonetheless brought Cleveland to national victory, poses problems for the thesis of this book. Even Bauer acknowledges as much: "How did Cleveland, living in an era when public standards of morality were much stricter, triumph?" she asks.

She hasn't the faintest idea. Instead, she moves quickly on to another oddity: "The outcry for [Bill] Clinton's admission of wrongdoing was matched four years after by a call from the pews of the Catholic church: a demand that the Catholic hierarchy admit its own sin in allowing known pedophiles to 'minister' to children," Bauer writes.

Now let's parse that a bit. On the one hand we have Clinton, who after falling briefly for a thong-snapper, did what most men do on being questioned about it. He lied. And on the other we have Bernard Cardinal Law, bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, who had sheltered and reassigned a number of criminal priests who were repeat child molesters.

Cardinal Law's first response when a Boston newspaper reported the scandal was to say, "We would be less than the community of faith and love . . . were we not to attempt to respond both to victim and betrayer in truth, in love and in reconciliation." When that didn't go over so well, he tried an apology. In other words, when caught he didn't lie; but by then, who cared? The guy was toast.

In fact, in practically every chapter, Bauer manages to ignite a spectacular incineration of her premise. "Law's three apologies had not averted blame," she writes. But Clinton, who didn't apologize until really late in the game, "was able to arouse a certain public sympathy for his lies."

Why? Once again the author doesn't seem to know, so I'll tell her. Clinton survived because everyone understands that politicians are mass seducers. That's their central talent, and it's really hard for any of them to stop plying their trade in private. The reason Cardinal Law had to go is that most people also understand that someone who coddles child molesters has nothing to say, however self-abasing, to the rest of us.

Nothing we want to hear, anyway. ♦

Where the Elite Meet

To see, be seen, and move the merchandise.

BY SAMANTHA SAULT

New York

For most of us, early September is the end of summer. For the fashion industry, early September is the start of spring. And the week of September 5-12, designers, editors, and assorted admirers took over Manhattan for Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, a showcase for the New York-based designers' Spring/Summer 2009 ready-to-wear collections.

Every September, IMG Fashion erects enormous white tents in Bryant Park—decorated this season with brightly colored slogans like "Vote Fashion" and "Accessorize Democracy"—to house Fashion Week headquarters and many of the runway shows, while more shows and celebrity-studded parties take place throughout the city. After New York Fashion Week, the industry packs its bags and heads to other cities, including London, Milan, and Paris, where last week the top of the top designers, from Alexander McQueen to (the late) Yves Saint Laurent, show collections. And in February IMG will pitch their tents again, visible from blocks away, for the Fall/Winter collections—and the cycle continues.

"Fashion Week is as important to those who work in fashion as getting dressed in the morning is to the rest of the population," stylist and fashion expert Kate Schelter told me as we waited for the Peter Som show. "This is where we tap into all of the very exclusive information that's only available and accessible to those who work in fashion."

That "exclusive information"—a glimpse of trends nearly a year in advance—is the Holy Grail for the fashion-obsessed. It's surprisingly easy for journalists to get inside the roped-off, heavily guarded tents, and

The Bryant Park tent

SAMANTHA SAULT

I arrived with time to spare before my first scheduled show, Hervé Léger, one of designer Max Azria's three shows during the week. With my official Fashion Week press badge I breezed past security, past the dozens of paparazzi and tourists hoping to spot a Desperate Housewife or *Project Runway* star, and past the requisite protesters: PETA in red-stained *faux* furs and buxom women calling for "curves on the catwalk."

Of course, upon entering, I quickly

Samantha Sault is a deputy online editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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realized that insiders don't actually *wear* the badge—even a Mercedes-Benz lanyard clashes with $700 Christian Louboutin platform heels—and I tucked my badge in my bag.

And although I had the official neon cardstock Hervé Léger invitation, the public relations representative told me I'd have to wait for standing room. So I got in line with a large, decidedly pushy crowd of women with massive, weapon-like shoes and bags, and waited. Twenty minutes after the scheduled start time, another Fashion Week rep told the crowd of at least 100—all holding official invitations!—that only 40 would be allowed inside.

I managed to get inside the Promenade tent, the medium-sized of the three Bryant Park runways, and squeeze through a crowd of socialites—or people I am guessing are socialites—and high-strung PR reps with headsets to a spot beside a photographer where, if I craned my neck slightly, I had a perfect view of the red-lit runway.

For anyone with the slightest interest in fashion, a runway show, especially one's first, is exhilarating—if your feet can stand waiting for it. Three-quarters of an hour after the scheduled starting time—and actress Michelle Trachtenberg (*Gossip Girl*) and tennis star Maria Sharapova had been ushered in—the lights went dark and the packed tent fell silent. Dozens of stage lights popped alive and an ear-splitting techno beat pulsed through the room as the first model took the stage. And for the next 10 minutes, a chorus line of leggy waifs with perfect cheekbones paraded the runway in time to tunes like "Wild Thing."

They wore the signature skin-tight Hervé Léger bandage dresses, in yellows and pinks and metallics, then skin-baring black dominatrix-style dresses—and then bandage bathing suits that only a runway model could wear. According to a Style.com blogger, the bandage dress "is fast emerging as the outfit to be seen in," and if I had the life and legs of a jet-set model, I'd want one, too—which means the show was a success.

Even after waiting 45 minutes for a decidedly brief presentation, the elated audience pressed on to wait in line for the next show, eager to get a glimpse of next spring's color and design trends before the rest of the world.

And so goes Fashion Week—unless you're an editor at a magazine like *Vogue*, a buyer for a high-end department store like Neiman Marcus, or a New York socialite, or Hollywood starlet who might actually purchase that lemon yellow Hervé Léger dress for a red-carpet event. These citizen-insiders don't wait in the lines, of course; they are escorted to the front row, where a swag bag awaits.

A Peter Som creation

CHRIS MOORE / CATWALKING / GETTY IMAGES

Prior to this latest Fashion Week, stories had warned of a dour, less extravagant affair than usual because of the economy. But Bryant Park wasn't in a slump. Mercedes-Benz, the primary sponsor, greeted attendees at the entrance with two shiny 2009 models. BlackBerry gave away new BlackBerry Pearl phones. Chambord and Imperia Vodka sponsored an open bar featuring stiff pink cocktails and frequented by svelte customers all day long. Surrounding Bryant Park's fountain at the center of the main tent sat over a dozen pairs of Swarovski-encrusted "ruby slippers" by designers like Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik, in honor of the 70th anniversary of *The Wizard of Oz*. I had the feeling I was not in Washington anymore.

Even if sales are lagging, the fashion houses keep up appearances. Caroline Rodehau, editor of the fashion website *New York Girl Style*, has been covering Fashion Week for four years and said this year's events "were as extravagant and elegant and sophisticated as previous shows." And to maintain sales, designers need to put on the best runway shows possible.

As designer Erin Fetherston explained to me, "It is amazing the amount of work that goes into a presentation that really is only about 10 to 15 minutes. But I often think of it as not just a 10-to-15-minute-long show, but a live photo shoot or film event, because what we do gets disseminated through the media"—and establishes an indelible image.

Given the massive crowds at Bryant Park, people are manifestly still interested in fashion—and continue to spend money if they can. Consider the American Express Skybox, a dark, luxurious suite overlooking the two largest runways where, for upwards of $150 per person, per show, American Express Gold, Platinum, and Centurion members enjoyed an unobstructed view of the runway and commentary from experts like Kate Schelter. Skybox tickets sold out this season.

While the view from the Skybox might have helped, the Peter Som show was impressive enough: an elegant collection of black and beige beaded floral skirts and dresses mixed with juicy pink and tangerine pieces, cinched tight with chic belts. It was in the Skybox where I caught my first (and only) glimpse of 58-year-old Anna (*The Devil Wears Prada*) Wintour, editor of *Vogue*, flanked by her bodyguards, literally

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running out of the tent the second the show was finished.

So aside from the glamour, the celebrity sightings, and the first look at fabrics and trends, why attend the Fashion Week circus if, as Erin Fetherston says, photos and videos of the collections are available soon afterwards? "You really do get the sense of the fashion community here, and everyone plays a part," she explained. "All the models come into town, the designers have their collections ready, all the press is here. It's an important place to begin the synthesis of trend and see the major directions of fashion."

The energy of the week is, indeed, intoxicating: The excited/fashionable crowds; the models jogging to their next runway; the editors and journalists discussing the trends—black and white, pops of color mixed with sleek beige, sheer and loose fabrics, and a plethora of belts—and at the end of the day, when the tents clear out, the industry insiders moving to clubs for celebrity shows by the likes of Justin Timberlake (!), alcohol-soaked parties, and photo-ops with yet more insiders.

Still, it's the unexpected moments of a live show that get fashionistas most excited. "Carolina Herrera just rocked my world," Kate Schelter gushed. "She opened with all these red dresses, which immediately made me think of Valentino, as he's just retired and he's famous for his red gowns. That really was a show-stopper for me."

To be sure, for a fashion novice, a "show-stopping" moment might be as simple as a lovely, wearable collection like Twinkle by Wenlan: retro-style dresses and high-waist skirts in black and white with big buttons and bangles. Or the chance front-row seat at up-and-coming designer Sergio Davila's show. His collection was inspired by American immigrants of the 1930s, and while it wasn't the most beautiful to be seen, the rich fabrics up-close are stunning.

So the appeal of Fashion Week is simple. As the Japanese designer Akiko Ogawa said (in translation) backstage after her show, "It's fun and entertaining." And beautiful—like spring. ♦

Cuba's Gift

Building the market for rum, and a brand name.

BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

Anyone interested in drinking knows that Bacardi is one of the world's great brands. It's the third largest spirits company in the world, and owns not only Bacardi rum, but also Martini and Rossi, Dewar's whiskey, Bombay Sapphire gin, and other products. But it's also a secretive family-owned multinational corporation; the company's current president, Facundo Bacardi, is the great-great grandson and namesake of the firm's founder.

Bacardi and the Long Fight for Cuba
The Biography of a Cause
by Tom Gjelten
Viking, 480 pp., $27.95

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Any family-owned firm that has lasted for more than three generations has a story worth telling, and Tom Gjelten, a correspondent for National Public Radio, has decided to use the family chronicle of the Bacardis as a way to tell the history of Cuba.

If this volume were a cocktail, it would comprise two parts Cuban history to one part corporate history. But Gjelten's book would have been more successful if the proportions were reversed. He spends far too much time and energy describing Cuban politics before Fidel Castro and not enough space discussing Bacardi's history. In particular, he gives minimal space to the technical advances that ensured that Bacardi rum became one of the world's great brands. So while *Bacardi and the Long Fight for Cuba* is worth reading, it would have been stronger if it devoted more space to business and less to politics.

The Bacardi story begins in 1862 when the company's founder, Facundo Bacardi Massó, decided to open a distillery in Santiago, Cuba's second largest city. Rum makers are among the world's oldest enterprises; some Caribbean firms have been making rum since the 18th century. But these old rums were dark beverages that often acquired off-flavors. Bacardi's was different. It was the first light, or "silver," rum. It's not certain why Bacardi came up with his innovation, but he was the first rum maker to char his barrels and to use American white oak for the barrel staves, which ensured that rum aged in the oak barrels had a light, crisp taste.

Whatever the reason for its creation, Bacardi's light rum proved popular. Bacardi was an excellent marketer, and his talents at market-

Martin Morse Wooster, senior fellow at the Capital Research Center, writes on beer and spirits for Mid-Atlantic Brewing News *and* American Brewer.

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ing were exceeded by his son-in-law and successor, Enrique Schueg, who expanded Bacardi Rum's presence overseas, including an important expansion into Puerto Rico. Finally, Bacardi Rum was helped when its chemists discovered, in the 1940s, that they could duplicate the flavor profile of high-sulfite Cuban molasses in any Bacardi distillery. This ensured that Bacardi could be consistently made anywhere, making it more of a rootless product like lager beers than older rums, single-malt whiskies, or fine wines that are tied to a particular place.

Gjelten also shows that Americans did a great deal to ensure Bacardi Rum's success. The Rough Riders who charged San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War of 1898 came home with a taste for rum, and brought the daiquiri and the Cuba libre (rum and Coca-Cola) back to America with them. In the 1920s thirsty Americans fled Prohibition for Havana to spend their days downing potent Bacardi-based cocktails at Sloppy Joe's and the Plaza. In the 1950s a third generation of Americans flocked to Havana to gamble and take in shows, mostly in Mafia-controlled nightclubs.

In his best chapters, Gjelten shows what happened when the Bacardi family was caught in Castro's takeover of the country. In the 1950s Bacardi Rum was the second largest company in Cuba. Many Bacardi heirs dabbled in radical politics and Bacardi's president, Jose "Pepin" Bosch, thought of himself as a political liberal and his firm as an enlightened company that provided its workers with good benefits and high wages.

Of the Bacardis who dabbled in radical politics, none was as fervent as Vilma Espín, daughter of Bacardi Rum's chief accountant, who quit the company, joined the revolution, and subsequently married Raúl Castro! When Raúl, Fidel, and their fellow guerrillas ousted the dictator Fulgencio Batista in January 1959, the official Bacardi company magazine editorialized that "today we Cubans are happy. We have faith in our nation, and we hope that our country can be organized for the benefit of all and not just for the few."

As 1959 progressed, hard-line Marxists replaced nonsocialists in Castro's cabinet. Pepin Bosch prepared for nationalization. His smartest move was to get the Bacardi trademark documents out of Cuba by mailing them to Bacardi Rum's Miami offices. When Bacardi Rum's properties were seized in October 1960, the Cuban government at first made no attempt to attack the Bacardi trademarks, apparently because Marxists believed that trademarks weren't actually property and therefore could be ignored. But by the time the Cuban government had recognized its mistake the Bacardi trademarks were secured, and efforts by the Cuban state to sell "Bacardi" rum overseas were blocked by international courts.

Bacardi Rum successfully reorganized, and the firm became a major international player in part because its rum was less flavorful and blander than rival brands and thus appealed to young people who didn't like the taste of rum. Paul Nelson, who directed marketing for Bacardi's U.S. division, told the *New York Times* in 1987 that Bacardi sold itself to "the naïve segment, particularly younger females who don't like the taste of alcohol but like to participate socially."

It's unclear how and if Bacardi will return to Cuba when Fidel and Raúl Castro die. The firm must also determine how to deal with drinkers who increasingly prefer spirits from smaller firms with interesting histories to blander international brands. Still, Tom Gjelten's interesting account shows that a firm that has survived being seized by Castro is capable of facing the challenges of dealing with a changing market. ♦

Georgians in Love

The world of post-Soviet immigrants in America.

BY ANDREW PALMER

Sana Krasikov's debut short story collection is, it's true, full of post-Soviet immigrants—mostly Georgians—struggling to make their way in and around New York. But even if there is some novelty to this subject matter, and even if part of our interest in these stories may be sociological, Krasikov's lens points squarely at the individual, rather than the type. And the array of characters she tackles is dazzling, cutting across lines of gender, generation, religion, occupation, and class.

One More Year
Stories
by Sana Krasikov
Spiegel & Grau, 240 pp., $21.95

One story features a 22-year-old Georgian immigrant working as a waitress in Westchester County; another a divorced Tajik Muslim formerly married to a man with another, concurrent, wife; another a Russian professional who is lured to America by IBM, only to return to Moscow in a fit of dubious Christian spirituality. Each has come to America for a different reason, often (and surprisingly) not directly connected with Communist pressures, post-Communist economic hardship, or Georgia's 1991-95 civil war. They all have the same problem, though, and it is everyone's problem: love.

Take "Companion." Ilona Siegal (a lone seagull, anyone?), 45 years old, has left Tbilisi, Georgia's capital, where she worked as a nurse and her husband as an administrator at an electronics institute. They lived,

Andrew Palmer is a writer in Brooklyn.

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in her words, "a good life" there. The civil war had not yet begun. When asked why she left, she replies, "Everybody was leaving, all our friends. I didn't want to be in the last wagon on the train." After a few years, their decision proves retrospectively prudent:

> The friends who had stayed began to write letters full of horror stories: demonstrations stopped by troops armed with shovels and clubs, backed by tanks, spraying tear gas and chloropicrin in people's faces. Then the electronics institute had closed, bankrupt without the contracts that had come from Russia. The Russian families they knew were fleeing and settling in remote towns where the government in Moscow had given them asylum and a bit of land. Even if her husband had wanted to return, there would have been nothing to return to.

Her true reason for leaving Georgia, though, her dirty secret, is that she had fallen in love with the husband of her best friend. Predictably, Ilona's marriage falls apart in America. Her affair is cut off, and she is compelled to take a job answering phone calls at a urologist's office and sublet a tiny bedroom in the apartment of a benignly lecherous 70-year-old man, for whom she also acts as a caretaker. She dates losers and attends parties thrown by the same friend whose husband was the reason for her immigration.

When she finally finds a man enough like her to have sex with, a middle-aged refugee who was a physician in Georgia and now lays carpet, he regales her with civil war-era stories about fending off drug addicts trying to raid a hospital or about pretending to save a dead man's life for the sake of his onlooking friends.

Here, as in the similar but superior "Maia in Yonkers," the world of the protagonist's family and friends—the Old World—is deftly counterpoised against the world of her elderly employer—the New World—and the two worlds rush together in neatly orchestrated climaxes.

Neither world offers much hope. In Krasikov's universe, unlucky people—often divorced or widowed or betrayed women—grasp for the faintest intimations of love, or friendship, or goodwill, only to be rebuffed by other people seeking the same things in different places, or by people who care mostly about money. It is a universe ruled almost exclusively by self-interest, and worse.

Consider:

> Like anyone else, Lawrence would be gracious until the time came to be cruel.
>
> From now on, he thinks, she will speak his name in the same uncharitable way that she talks about all the others who've failed her.
>
> When she voiced her suffering in their living rooms, they listened closely to the parts of her story that confirmed that her common sense had gone slack.
>
> I remembered all the times in my life I had begun to fall in love, *had* fallen in love, and then told myself I had been wrong. Because people, when you got down to it, always ended up being so disappointing.

And so the worst in human nature is confirmed.

Krasikov's beginnings are ominous; her endings are sad. There is humor ("He was thin, in the famished way of grazing animals and endurance athletes") and it is often funny, but it's the soggy kind—the mirthless, unredemptive humor of near-total cynicism. Not quite total: We are allowed occasional glimpses of successful marriages and real friendships; but on the whole, these are bleak stories.

And yet it's a comfortable bleakness. The drooped-shoulders tone is almost requisite in this strain of realism, and Krasikov's method is conservative and consistent, to a point that may make some readers fidget. All but one of the eight stories is told in the limited third-person perspective, with all of its trappings.

Thought is rendered in rhetorical questions or in ejaculations beginning with "How" ("How she hated him! To think he'd driven back just to torment her"). Emotion is encrypted in action: "Her elbow knocked the nail polish over and spilled a pool on the newsprint. A heated prickle was spreading down her arms." Stories begin *in medias res*, then wriggle out from the rubble of backstory (more cleanly in some stories than in others) and tiptoe forward in discrete scenes delineated by space breaks.

In the end, the pieces fall more or less neatly into place. It is a method that lends itself to almost complete sympathetic identification with the protagonists. We see few signs of the author, both because she does not distance herself critically from her subjects and because she does not adjust her style much from story to story, no matter the variety of her characters. There are not many surprises, and few real lunges toward the sublime—those sudden, disorienting leaps in perspective that we see in clear influences such as Chekhov or Munro, or in Jhumpa Lahiri, to whom Krasikov will be compared.

The prose is professional and unflashy, with a few highlights—"The elevator greets them with a faint odor of cat piss, a scent she's breathed so many times she can smell it now only because Gogi is inhaling it too." . . . "She's slim to the point of gauntness, the result of some kind of exercise-mania the two of them must be involved in together"—and fewer solecisms: "[A] high squealing of brakes" . . . "She's amazed to see not just families inside but also adults."

The dialogue captures, sometimes disarmingly, the nuanced speech patterns of the variegated characters, and Krasikov's descriptive eye is discerning and unflinching. And in the end, most of these eight stories pack a substantial punch—a dampened blow, at least. The best of them—"Companion," "Maia in Yonkers," "Debt"—set personal disturbances against a backdrop of political and economic upheaval. The gradual revelation of the characters' pasts, and their intricate relationships to one another, contribute to a quiet but irresistible tension.

As a whole, *One More Year* presents convincing evidence for the duplicity of love—its enduring pull, its apparent eagerness to plunge the knife into your already-stooped back. ♦

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Paul Newman, 1925-2008

'He made it seem like great fun to be a guy.'

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

There is a moment in *The Sting*, the most popular movie Paul Newman ever made, when his character, the con man Henry Gondorff, wins a pot in a poker game. Gondorff is deliberately trying to get under the skin of his poker rival, a gangster named Lonergan, against whom he is running a complex scam. In a gesture meant to drive Lonergan mad with its sheer obnoxiousness, Gondorff ebulliently claps his hands and rubs his palms together as he gathers the huge pile of chips and brings them home.

That moment crystallizes the central quality of Newman's 50-year career in the movies: the unbridled, infectious pleasure he took in playacting another person. And playacting is what it was, because never in the course of his career did he actually succeed in convincing an audience that he was anyone other than Paul Newman. It was, instead, as though he were an especially personable small child in dress-up, doing everything possible to lose himself in fantasy even as his indulgent parents beam and think he is the most adorable creature alive—perhaps even more adorable for making the effort to sound and act differently when he has no earthly reason to do so.

Newman played a remarkable variety of roles—Boston Irish broken-down lawyer (*The Verdict*), Chicago Irish gangster (*The Road to Perdition)*, Italian boxer (*Somebody Up There Likes Me*), no-account Texas heel (*Hud*), Mississippi barn-burner (*The Long Hot Summer*), Louisiana governor Earl Long (*Blaze*), impotent and possibly homosexual former football star (*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), gigolo (*Sweet Bird of Youth*), broken-down private eye (*Harper*), surly cowboy raised by Indians (*Hombre*), bank robber (*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*), third-rate minor league hockey coach (*Slap Shot*), first-rate pool shark (*The Hustler*). To every one of these roles, no matter how low-rent or low-life he was supposed to be, he brought one essential quality: his vivid, enthusiastic, devastatingly attractive self. He was the only kind of loser a motion-picture audience will really clasp to its bosom: a winner who is slumming it.

Like all post-Brando American actors, he tried to be an antihero. In *Hud* he was a rapist. In *The Hustler* he helped drive a woman to suicide. In *The Long Hot Summer* he engaged in arson. But could anyone really believe Paul Newman would behave like that? Such a nice boy, so charming, and so good-looking, with those blue eyes. It was the same when he took on the part of an alcoholic, which he essayed numerous times; even when he tried his hardest, he did not have it in him to convey that kind of weakness or illness.

We could be told of the failures visited upon his friends and family by his self-indulgence; but really, Paul Newman a *drunk*? What would *he* need a drink for? No matter the picture, in the midst of all the trouble his character was causing, his aqua eyes would glitter, he would turn his lips up in that billion-watt smile, and whatever the sins he was mimicking, all was forgiven.

The visual feast that was Paul Newman needs no eulogizing; it is the most obvious and ordinary fact about him. The actual key to understanding his extraordinary career was his gravelly, harsh voice. Its ugliness served to undercut his beauty—to scar it, really. Newman was a slight man, and the dreamy quality of his soft eyes might have made him seem insubstantial. The sandpaper scratch of his voice was what he needed and used to add anger, threat, danger, and despair. It took his prettiness and made it seem imposing and powerful. The contrast is what made him manly, and manliness was at the core of what made Newman the most enduring male star of the postwar era.

Whatever neuroses his characters might have been displaying, Newman made it seem like great fun to be a guy. *Harper* opens with a scene in which he can't find any new coffee to make in the morning, so he digs yesterday's grounds out of the garbage and boils himself up a new cup. This bit, the perfect encapsulation of what life is like for a too-old slovenly bachelor, is what turned Newman from an easily eclipsed star like Glenn Ford (who was, then, Newman's equal in Hollywood) into an icon to rival Humphrey Bogart. Like Bogart in *Casablanca*, the opening of *Harper* offered a quick-sketch portrait of what it looks like when a man is entirely comfortable in his own skin.

There are similar moments throughout his career: Jumping off the cliff in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, brushing his finger against his nose as a private signal of respect and affection in *The Sting*, beaming avuncularly as he watches inane Ice Capades skaters perform in a Christmas show in *Slap Shot*, playing cards and shooting the breeze for years with his old buddy Gene Hackman in *Twilight* (the best little-known Newman movie).

At his best, and he usually was at his best, Paul Newman gave his audience more than a performance. He made them feel joy, which may be even rarer than seeing a great Hamlet. ♦

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"As the Swedish Academy enters final deliberations for this year's [Nobel Prize for Literature], permanent secretary Horace Engdahl said it's no coincidence that most winners are European. . . .'The U.S. is too isolated, too insular. They don't translate enough and don't really participate in the big dialogue of literature,' Engdahl said. 'That ignorance is restraining.'"

—Associated Press

CHAPTER 2

Helga's blonde tresses fell across the pillow as Ingemar wrestled her onto the quilt. There was a chill in the brisk Stockholm air—but not as chill as last year, thanks to the growing evidence of climate change.

"I want to protect you like a U.N. peacekeeper," Ingemar gasped. Helga smiled. It was the smile of a woman who knew she enjoyed equality of opportunity in lovemaking as well as the workplace.

"I want to be like a U.N. weapons inspector," Ingemar went on. "I long to go where no man has gone before."

The cool, hard surface of Helga's back grew warmer as she arched toward Ingemar's hot flesh. This was the back that Helga, not as young as she used to be, had gotten massaged at the State Medical Service clinic near the sauna. Now it was Ingemar whose probing fingers made the ache go away.

"I used to think paying my income tax was the most exquisite pain I knew," said Ingemar, as he gathered Helga in his arms. "But being away from you"—here his voice broke—"is so much worse than subsidizing the welfare state."

Helga took a deep breath, and gazed at the ceiling. "I can feel your love within me, Ingemar," she muttered, her voice rising and falling with each beat of her heart. "It's like a transfer of capital from an industrial state to a less developed economy."

Now it was Ingemar's turn to smile. "I want you to forget you're Scandinavian," he said, raising his head about 10.5 centimeters, "or even that we're members of the EU. I want you to make love to me the Third World way. I want to put my ethanol in your tank. I want the fjords to rise,

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